■ World / A8

US television entertainer Johnny Carson; 79

■ Across / A15

DOH lifts meningococcemia alert in Baguio

■ Entertainment / A26

'The End' zooms in on 66-year-old Pines movie house

■ Business / B1

Stocks breach psychological barrier

Tanong ng Bayan / A10

Singil sa kuryente, dapat bang taasan?

CELLCARD KADA ARAW, CELLPHONE KADA LINGGO! Text 2910 now!

Shun gambling money, Church personnel told

By Blanche S. Rivera

THOU shalt not accept funds from "*jueteng*," "*sakla*" and "video *karera*."

The influential Catholic Bishops Conference of

SHUN/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

DTI probes 2 companies for alleged pyramiding

By Ronnel W. Domingo
Business

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has summoned officials of two companies to separate hearings on their alleged involvement in pyramid schemes, as it warned the public against participating in such enterprises dis-

DTI PROBES/ A6

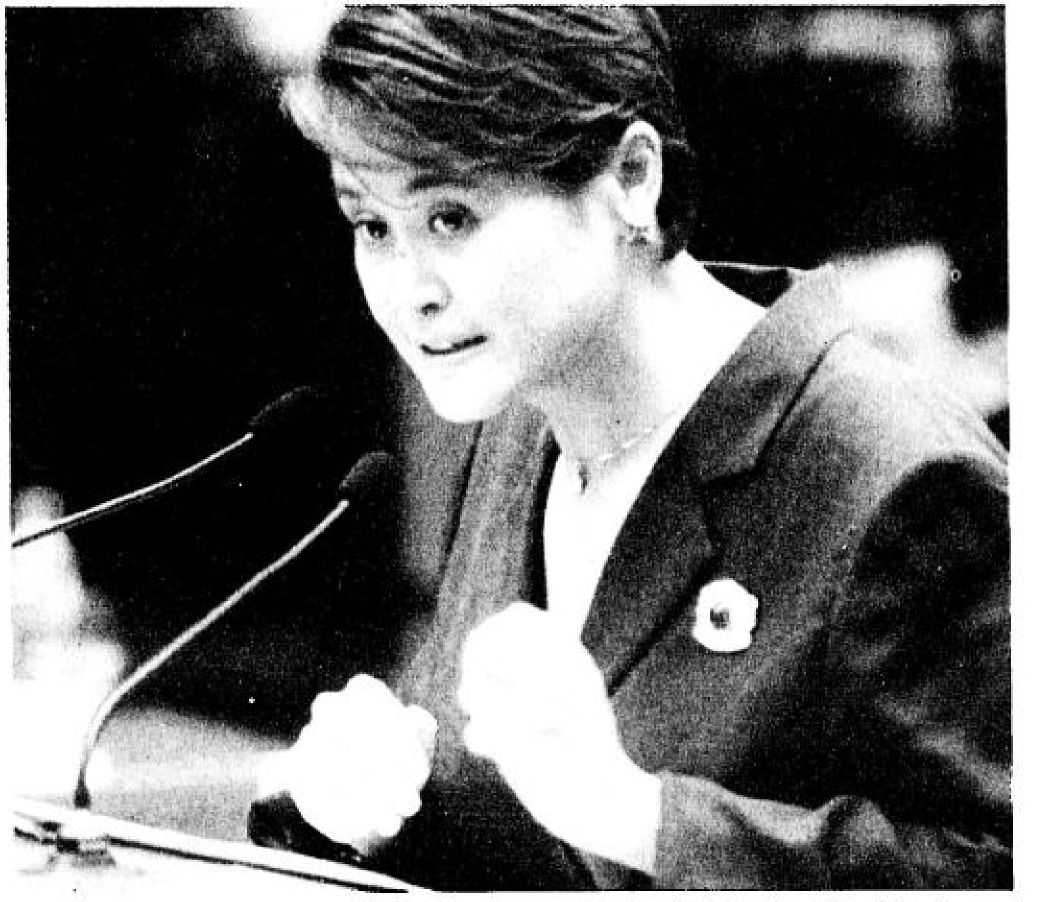
email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Tuesday, January 25, 2005 ★★ 38 pages 3 sections Vol. 20 / No. 48 P18

website: www.inq7.net

Jamby calls for Mike's resignation

Says family no longer into logging



MADRIGAL: We have not been in logging for 40 years, and we have not been in mining for a quarter of a century.
JESS YUSON

DEFENSOR stands by his earlier statement but admits he had not done thorough research.
JESS YUSON

By Michael Lim Ubac

SEN. JAMBY Madrigal demanded not only an apology from Environment Secretary Michael Defensor for maligning her family but also his resignation.

"He must resign. He has failed in his duties. He has done more harm than good. He has done the environment great injury; he has squandered his opportunity to serve the country," Madrigal said yesterday in a privilege speech.

Madrigal delivered the speech a day after Defensor accused her family of operating timber concessions in Aurora and Quezon where hundreds of people died late last year due to landslides traced to massive logging.

The secretary also claimed that the senator owned two mining companies.

Defensor mentioned the Madrigals' holdings in logging and mining following the opposition senator's accusation that the government's anti-illegal logging campaign had spared big-time timber poachers.

JAMBY/ A16

Gov accuses top DENR exec of protecting Zambo loggers

By Fe Zamora

A TOP environment official is giving the "royal treatment" to big-time loggers in Zamboanga del Norte, hindering the campaign to stop all forms of logging in the province, according to Gov. Rolando Yebes.

Yebes identified the official as Ramon Paje, undersecretary for operations of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The governor said Paje issued on Dec. 23, 2004, a memorandum that allowed Dacon Logging Co. to transport 2,281.44 cubic meters of logs from the "Triple S-B" area (Sibuco-Siocon-Sirawai and Baliquian towns) to processing plants in Zamboanga City.

Dacon is owned by David Consunji, a logging concessionaire in Mindanao who also owns Sodaco Agricultural Corp. and Sirawai Plywood and Lumber Corp., both based in Zamboanga del Norte, according to Yebes.

He said the Paje memorandum, a copy of which was furnished the INQUIRER, violated President Macapagal-Arroyo's order last Dec. 6 banning all forms of logging nationwide.

He said it also breached a memorandum issued by Environment Secretary Michael Defensor last Dec. 8 that cancelled all logging permits in Quezon province and suspended all permits in the rest of the country.

The orders issued by the President and Defensor came days after landslides and floods left more than 1,000 people dead in Quezon,

GOV/ A16

PNP sacks 2 cops who 'pressured' Aklan amok

By Christian V. Esguerra and Christine O. Avendaño

TWO POLICE officers were sacked yesterday for supposedly trying to pressure PO1 Jonathan Moreño—the policeman who went amuck and turned the Ati-atihan festival into a carnage—into accepting an alleged P500,000 bribe from a suspected drug lord.

PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay announced the relief of the two officers and said 54 other members of the Aklan force had been temporarily removed from their posts so they could undergo stress management counseling.

Aglipay identified the two officers who allegedly tried to pressure Moreño into accepting the bribe as SPO3 Fidel Velasco and PO3 James Emmanuel Laguna.

Eight people, including the Aklan provincial police chief, the Kalibo town police chief and a 10-year-old girl, were killed when Moreño opened fire with his Armalite rifle during the Jan. 16 celebration of the feast of the Sto. Niño.

"They were being relieved for allegedly pressuring PO1 Moreño into accepting a bribe," Aglipay told reporters.

Investigators are looking into the possibility that frustration, fear and alleged threats from the camp of suspected drug trafficker Jose Cuadra had driven the policeman to desperation.

The 54 other officers were temporarily stripped of their assignments because they actually saw how Moreño had gone berserk and, having witnessed such a gory incident, would need "stress management debriefing and counseling," said Director Arturo Lomibao, Task Force Kalibo chief.

The counseling sessions will be handled by PNP psychiatrists.

Another set of 70 of Aklan's 503 officers will be subjected to neuro-psychiatric tests.

At the time he went on the shooting rampage, Moreño was the PNP's star witness against Cuadra, having been part of the team that arrested the alleged drug lord on Caticlan island in 2001.

At the start of the Senate in-

PNP/ A16

Top customs exec, 'dummy' dismissed

By Armand N. Nocum

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman has ordered the dismissal of a top Bureau of Customs official for accumulating alleged ill-gotten wealth, and the sacking of her subordinate for grave misconduct and dishonesty.

Fired from the service were Bureau of Customs miscellaneous division chief Flor Gupilan Aguilar and her staff member, customs operations officer III Honore R. Hernandez, for allegedly fronting as the owner of Aguilar's expensive four-wheel drive vehicle.

In a 12-page decision issued on Jan. 20, Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo found Aguilar to have accumulated ill-gotten wealth.

Ombudsman investigators disclosed that Aguilar, who had worked at the Bureau of Customs for 28 years, owned more properties than she had declared in her Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN).'

Aguilar's annual salary was P249,876. In her SALN, she declared a net worth of P2.5 million in 1999 and P2.7 million in 2002.

Among her properties were a P12-million condominium at the Antel Seaview Towers on Roxas Boulevard; a P1-million house and lot in Fairview, Quezon City; a P148,200 residential lot in Naga City, and four luxury vehicles—two BMWs, a Honda CRV and an Isuzu Trooper.

"On top of these, Bureau of Immigration records disclosed that Aguilar, together with her children, made numerous travels to China, Hong Kong and the United

TOP/ A16

Palace, solons rebuff reported US spy branch

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Cynthia D. Balana

A REBUFF from the Palace and a howl of protest from some members of Congress.

"Definitely our position is we will solve our own problems and if we need their assistance, that's the only time they can come in. So, officially, it may not be acceptable to us," National Security Adviser Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said yesterday, reacting to the reported creation by the United States of new espionage unit for deployment in foreign countries, possibly including the Philippines.

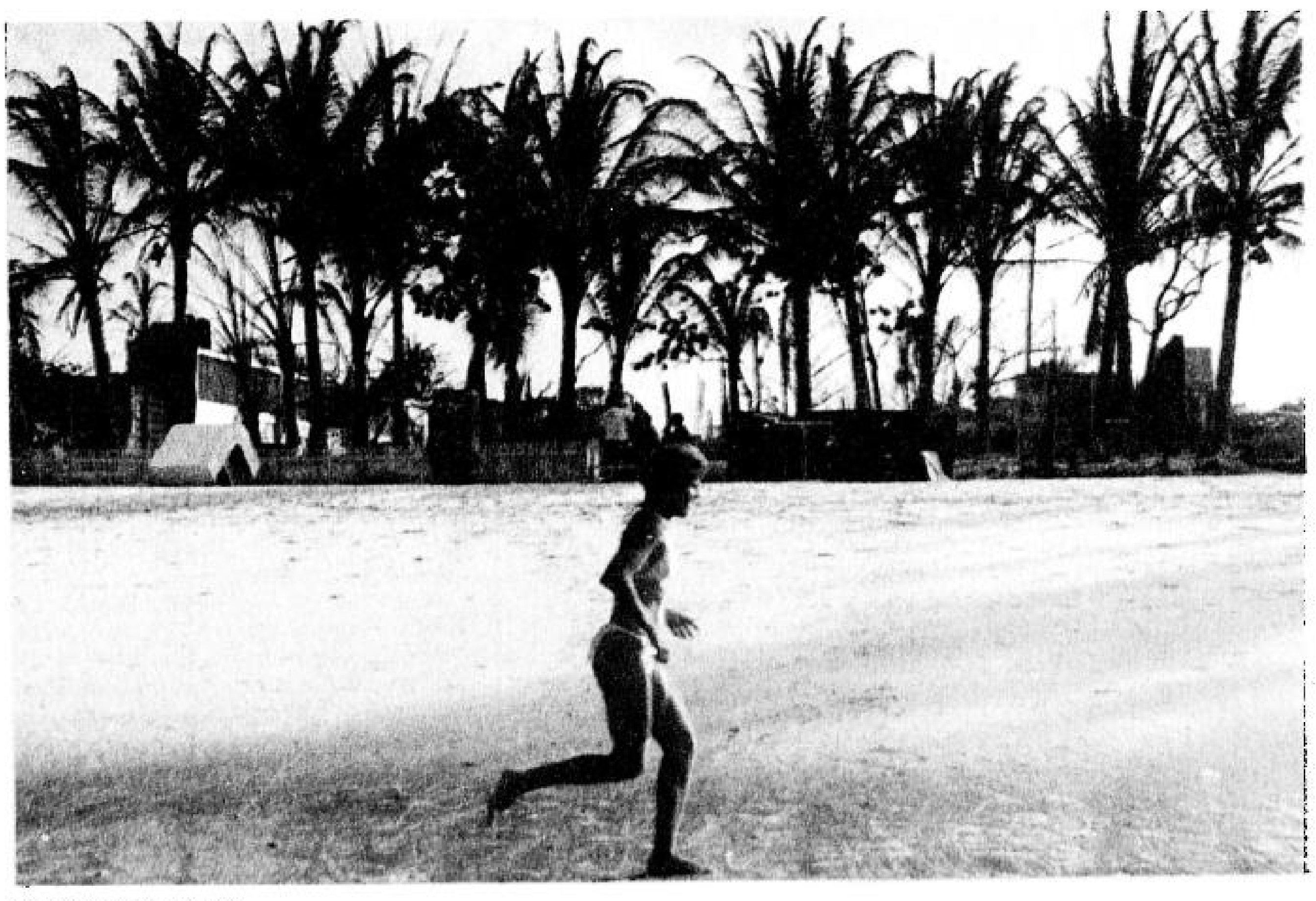
Ebdane told the INQUIRER that if there was indeed such a new spy agency under the US Department of Defense, its operation in this country would not be allowed under Philippine laws.

Representatives Crispin Beltran of Anakpawis and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna slammed the reported US move.

Beltran expressed concern that Washington might use the espionage unit to spy on members of the Philippine opposition.

The Washington Post said the new espionage arm—called the Strategic Support

PALACE/ A6



FUN AFTER FIRE
A foreign tourist jogs on the near empty beach of Boracay, several days after a fire hit the flea market of the popular island resort.
EDWIN BACASMAS

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms becoming widespread rains over the eastern sections. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/25/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Rains

GMA urges Luisita owners, workers to sit down and talk

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has finally stepped into the long drawn-out labor strike at the Cojuangco-owned Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, more than two months after seven people—five workers and two children—were killed in a bloody dispersal by police and military forces.

"We urge both parties to enter into negotiations as brothers and sisters sharing a common goal of national reconciliation, ever mindful and cautious of outside parties who intend to exacerbate the situation for their own selfish agenda," the President said in a statement released yesterday.

Talks between Luisita management and labor had stalled when both parties refused to return to the negotiating table after the workers went on strike on Nov. 6, 2004.

"Let us get to the heart of this problem, invest our good will and energies in resolving it peacefully," the President said.

Ms Arroyo had been sharply criticized for not only failing to intervene sooner to end the standoff at the sugar plantation but also for purportedly siding with the Cojuangco family.

This was the first time the President commented on the matter.

"We have a preferential priority for the poor, to give heed to their problems, to share their dreams for a better life, to help in the shaping of a strong nation—all within the context of respect for our laws," the President said.

Fearing another spate of violence at the hacienda, the country's bishops yesterday appealed to the government to exercise maximum tolerance in dealing with its defiant workers.

Officials of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines personally made the appeal to President Arroyo at Malacañang yesterday in behalf of the workers who refused to return to work despite an order from the Department of Labor and Employment.

Tarlac Bishop Florentino Cinense said he urged the President to give orders for "maximum tolerance and ... whatever is possible which is not against the law that favors the workers."

With Blanche S. Rivera

Dismiss Susan's suit, Gloria asks high court

By Philip C. Tubeza

SAYING Fernando Poe Jr.'s death was an "opportunity to bury the hatchet and move on," President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday asked the Supreme Court sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal to throw out the election protest he had filed against her.

Ms Arroyo also asked the PET to reject the petition of Poe's widow, Susan Roces, to substitute for her late husband in the case since there was no legal basis for her to do so.

In a 31-page comment, Ms Arroyo, through her lawyers Romulo Macalintal and Alberto Agra, said Poe's death last Dec. 14 effectively ended his protest. Poe had claimed he was cheated of victory in the May 10, 2004 polls.

"The protest filed by (Poe)... died with him. The right to contest the office of the presidency was personal to FPJ and is non-transferable, non-transmissible and non-delegable," the President's lawyers said.

They said Roces had no legal leg to stand on since, under PET rules, only the registered candidates who received the second and third highest number of votes could file a protest 30 days after the proclamation of the winner.

"(Poe's) spouse, any taxpayer or voter, his political party or anyone for that matter cannot substitute for the deceased protestant... (Roces) is not entitled to the office and, therefore, cannot be the substitute protestant. No one else could," the President's lawyers said.

The lawyers also said Roces could not claim that public interest required that the election protest continue.

"Public interest even justifies the dismissal of the election protest... public interest swings in both directions. The protestant has no monopoly of public interest. The interest of those who voted for protestee, the greater majority, should also be respected," they said.

"This would be an opportune time to bury the hatchet and move on. The political stability of the nation during this period of national recovery must be vigorously pursued by all," the President said.

In challenging Roces' pursuit of the case, the President's lawyers used the arguments of the Poes' own lawyer, Sixto Brillantes, in a previous election protest.

Brillantes, representing Ilocos Norte Rep. Roque Ablan, had argued in the election protest filed by the late Col. Rolando Abadilla against Ablan "that the widow of the deceased protestant cannot replace the latter since the contested election is not a property that could be transmitted to his heirs, and an election protest cannot commence in any event on the sheer justification that the true will of the voters must be ascertained."

Abadilla died in an ambush in 1996 while his protest was pending in the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal. After his death, his widow Susan S. Abadilla asked the HRET to allow her to pursue the case.

The HRET, however, ruled that the right to file and pursue an election protest was "purely personal" and the protest cannot survive after the one who filed it dies, Macalintal and Agra said.

Allies of Poe in Congress, meanwhile, are readying a bill that would require the Supreme Court to resolve presidential and vice presidential electoral protests within one year.

Poe's campaign spokesperson and now House Minority Leader Rep. Francis Escudero (NPC, Sorsogon) said the bill would be based on the principle of "justice delayed is justice denied."

"We're looking at a timetable of one year within which the Supreme Court, sitting as the electoral tribunal, must resolve a case," Escudero said.

With Carlito Pablo

Saudis looking into case of missing Filipino

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia—The Saudi authorities are looking into the case of a Filipino worker reported missing by the Philippine government, an Interior Ministry spokesperson has said.

Suelito Leong, 40, was reported missing by a co-worker on Jan. 18, according to the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs. He works for a telecommunications company in Riyadh.

Interior Ministry spokesperson Mansour al-Turki told reporters on Sunday night that he did not have any information about Leong.

"The issue is being looked into," al-Turki said.

Leong has not been heard of since his employer asked him to pick up plane tickets about 40 km from his company's office on Jan. 11. The car he was driving has also disappeared.

Leong's relatives, who live in Davao City, fear Leong may have been abducted, a television network reported. No reason was given for their concerns.

AP

Japan sticking to new policy on 'Japayukis,' says RP exec

By Jerome Aning

WITH Japan sticking to its new policy of not recognizing Philippine government certification in the deployment of Filipino overseas performing artists (OPAs), a senior labor official said yesterday efforts should now center on how to help the industry comply.

"They (the Japanese) have not changed their previous position. According to them they will implement it as soon as possible. We can't do anything about that," Danilo Cruz, labor undersecretary for employment promotions, told reporters.

Cruz and Foreign Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs Jose Brillantes met with a Japanese government delegation to discuss Tokyo's controversial law that would require OPAs to have at least two years of schooling or experience in the entertainment industry.

Cruz said the Department of Labor and Employment was ready to help the overseas entertainment industry to comply. For one thing, labor officials will be discussing with their counterparts in the Department of Education the development of a curriculum for an entertainment course for OPAs.

Cruz said that as far as he knew, there would be no further efforts by the government to make Tokyo change its mind or at least consider a moratorium before the new requirement is implemented.

The Japanese government put the stricter regulation in place after it was cited by the United States as one of the countries where human trafficking was rampant.

But Japan's new immigration policy is useless unless its government cracks down on the dreaded Yakuza syndicate preying on Filipino and other foreign entertainers, Rep. Edcel Lagman (Aksyon, Albay) said yesterday.

Returning from Japan where he and Rep. Roseller Barinaga (NPC, Zamboanga del Norte) lobbied Japanese officials in behalf of Filipino OPAs, Lagman said:

"Even if they close the door to Filipino OPAs, it will not solve the human trafficking crisis because of laxity in implementing their domestic laws."

"What's the purpose of looking for a perfect entertainer when they are not spared from the hands of the Yakuzas," Lagman said.

It is common knowledge that some foreign entertainers in Japan end up working as prostitutes and bar girls in establishments owned by Yakuza members.

With Carlito Pablo

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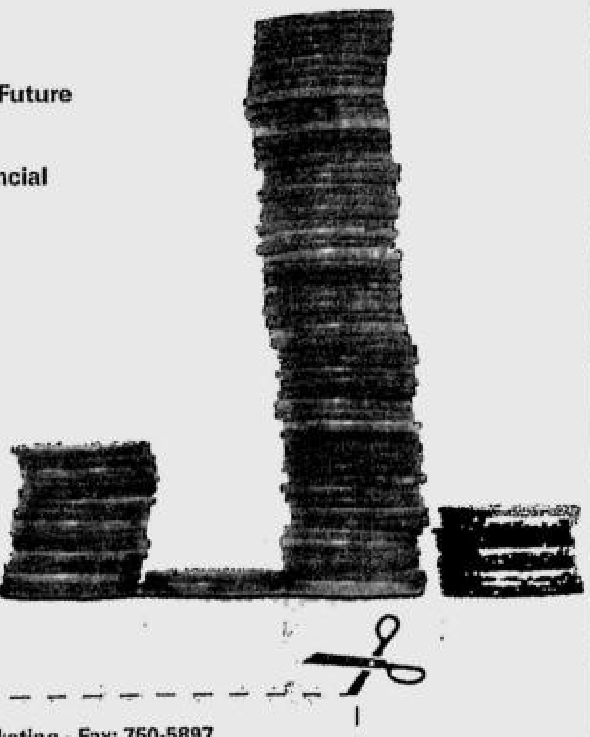

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Witness vs colonel missing

By Alcuin Papa

THE PRIMARY witness in the case against a military colonel who allegedly ordered the killing of a town mayor in Abra has apparently gone into hiding.

Army spokesperson Maj. Bartolome Bacarro told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo that Cpl. Eduardo Barcelona slipped out of a hospital where he was being treated for wounds he suffered in an ambush.

Bacarro appealed to Barcelona to come out and help the Army prosecute the case against Lt. Col. Noel Mislang, commander of the 41st Infantry Battalion based in Langangilang, Abra, and a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1984.

In two separate affidavits, Barcelona and Cpl. Antonio Rosqueta said Mislang had ordered them to kill Lagayan Mayor Cecilia Luna who was suspected to be a supporter of the communist New People's Army.

Rosqueta and Barcelona refused to carry out the order and instead reported the matter to the battalion's sergeant major.

'Comfort women' fund to be dissolved

TOKYO—A fund to compensate women forced into sex slavery by Japanese soldiers during World War II said Monday its work would be over in two years after it assisted several hundred of the tens of thousands of victims.

"The fund will be dissolved as it will finish all its compensation programs by March 2007," said the Asian Women's Fund, a privately financed group headed by former prime minister Tomiichi Murayama.

"We believe the fund's atonement projects have achieved what they were established for," it said in a statement.

The fund was established in 1995 under a left-leaning government to "convey the feelings of apology and remorse of the Japanese people and the government of Japan" and collected about 565 million yen (now $5.5 million) in donations.

The group has provided two million yen, medical and welfare support and a letter of apology each to 285 women in the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan who came forward.

The fund also gave the same assistance minus the money to 79 Dutch women who were forced into sex by Japanese troops in Indonesia, and funded a welfare center in Indonesia for elderly survivors.

Historians say at least 200,000 young women, mostly Korean but also from Taiwan, China, the Philippines and Indonesia, were forced to serve as sex slaves in Japanese army brothels during the war.

Many women remain reluctant to come forward out of shame and others considered the fund to be too little and too late. China declined to take any money through the program.

AFP

Poor treated like children of lesser god

By Carlito Pablo

LIKE children of a lesser god.

This, according to Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. (PDP-Laban, Makati), is how the poor is being regarded by administration proponents inside and outside Congress of an increase in the Value-Added Tax.

In a passionately worded privilege speech yesterday, Locsin chastised the "patronizing" defense for the proposed VAT increase in that since the poor eat only "raw" items, which are already VAT exempt, an increase in VAT shouldn't bother them.

"Indeed, these legislators argued, since the poor subsist on raw items like rice, root crops and other low-end 'feeds'—as though the poor were hogs or chickens—and since such low end items are anyway excluded from VAT, then a two percent increase should not affect them," Locsin said.

"Our lawmakers have gotten into the nasty habit of looking so far down on the lowest income classes as to regard them as less than fully human," Locsin said.

Locsin also debunked a report prepared by the National Economic Development Authority, which claimed that since VAT is a consumption tax, it will fall harder on those who spend more than those who spend less.

Int'l media group arriving today to investigate RP journalists' murders

A TEAM from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is arriving today to investigate the spate of murders of reporters in the country, it was announced yesterday.

The mission, led by delegates from Australia and Indonesia, will meet the families of murdered journalists, police investigators looking into the cases and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, the union said in a statement.

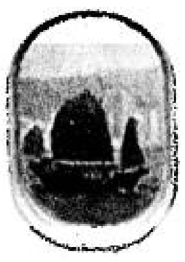
During their seven-day trip beginning Tuesday, the group will visit the cities of General Santos, Iloilo, Legazpi and Manila before presenting the preliminary results of their inquiry on Jan. 31.

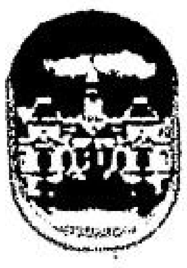
An IFJ report this month said the murder of 13 Filipino journalists in 2004 made the country one of the world's most dangerous places for journalists to operate.

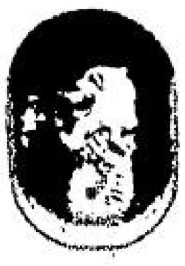
The killings had created a crisis for the free press in the Philippines and tarnished the country's democratic credentials, said the IFJ, the world's largest organization of journalists with more than 500,000 members.

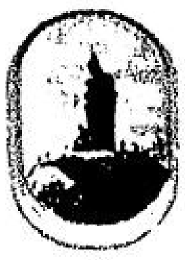
The Brussels-based lobby group has charged that 55 journalists had been killed since democracy was restored in 1986 and not a single person has been convicted.

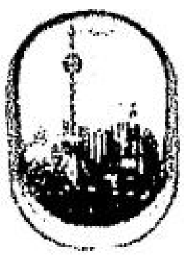
The government has said the IFJ's report was misleading. *AFP*

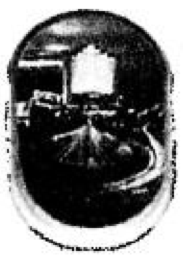












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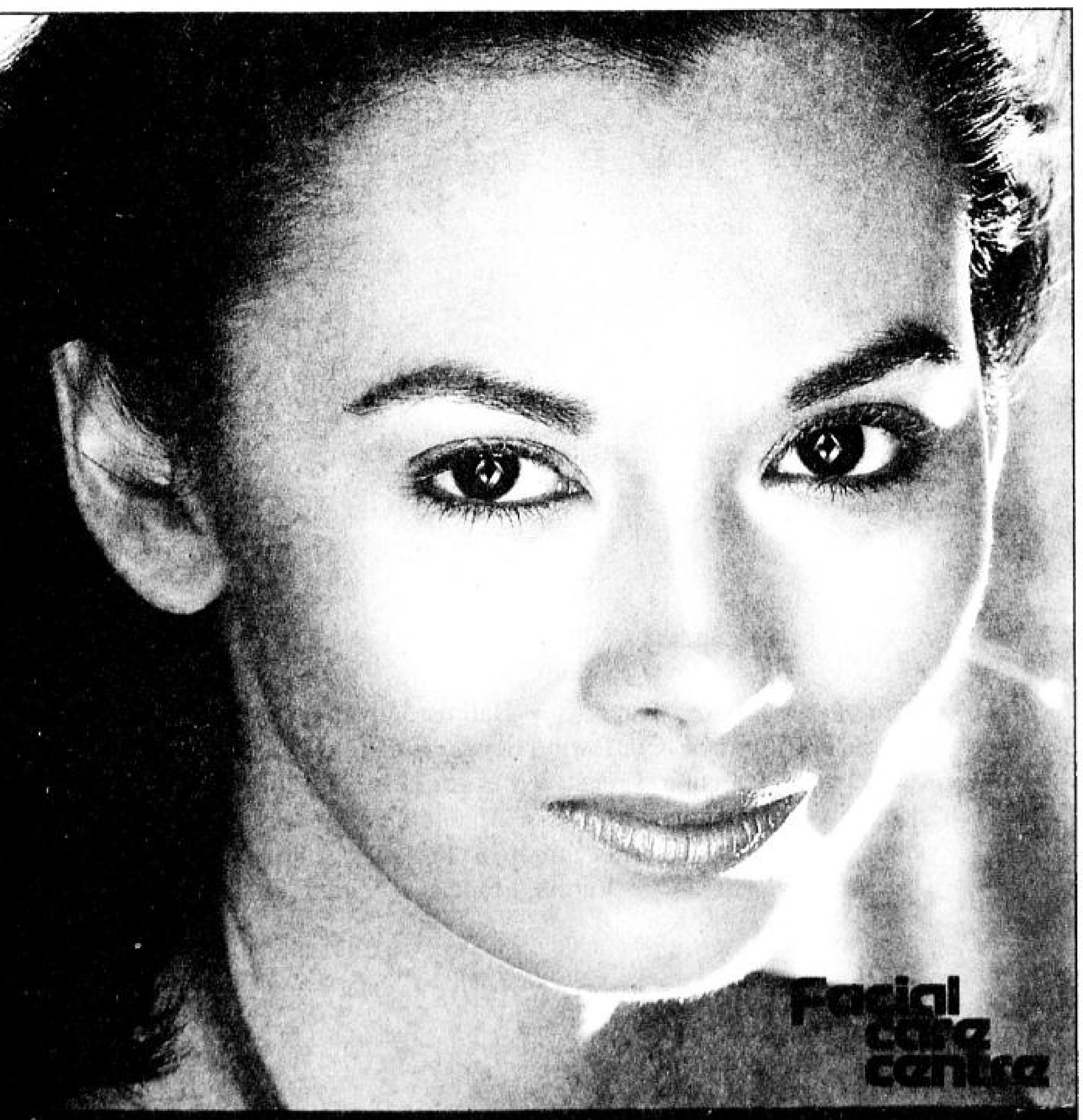

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TAXATION FOR GROWTH

A Position Paper of the Foundation for Economic Freedom

The Fellows of the Foundation for Economic Freedom keenly observes the current debate on tax policy with great interest and deep concern. The legislation that will emerge from this current debate will have profound implications for our economy, far beyond the exigencies of the moment and the near-term concerns of the political players crafting policy.

We recognize the urgent need of our government to dramatically raise revenues and ease the fiscal difficulties brought about by a large debt load and a narrow tax base. We accept that public revenue enhancement is imperative over the short and medium term, even as we continue to call for downsizing and greater efficiency in government operations as the critical objective over the long term to support the wealth-creating activities of the private sector.

However, the manner by which we tax our people ought not to be driven merely by purposes of raising revenue. More importantly, our tax policy should be designed to support, rather than deter, the evolution of a dynamic and competitive economy that encourages investments and creates jobs.

We acknowledge that our present tax effort is way below par in comparison with other progressive economies, including those in our region. That poor tax effort forces government to rely on borrowing to finance its needs, thereby crowding out the credit requirements of the wealth-creating private sector. Poor tax effort is the result both of tax administration seriously in want of improvement and the structure of our tax policy.

We are apprehensive that some of our legislators might be inclined to yield to populism, preferring measures that will narrow the tax base rather than widen it. These are measures that might increase revenues in the short term but will diminish our economy's competitiveness in the long run, thereby penalizing our people with stagnation, underproductivity and unemployment.

We note studies done internationally demonstrating that factor income taxation reduces growth because it discourages accumulation of human and physical capital. On this basis, we disagree with proposals to raise corporate tax rates — especially since the general trend elsewhere in the world is to reduce corporate taxation in order to encourage expansion in investments. Raising corporate tax rates will only undermine our ability to attract investments and therefore our ability to create employment opportunities for our people.

We agree that the most effective way to raise revenues in the immediate term without compromising our economy's capacity for growth is to increase value added taxation (VAT). In addition, we support moves to reduce exemptions to the VAT. These exemptions — which are mere concessions to the most vociferous vested interests — only undermine the effectiveness of what is otherwise an excellent system.

The Foundation for Economic Freedom strongly endorses proposals in Congress raising the VAT rate to 12%, dramatically reducing the number of exemptions, and widening the revenue base so that it will ensure government's ability to provide an ever-expanding range of public goods for the benefit of our people.

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‘Double-book’ system costing gov’t billions of pesos in lost taxes

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PHILIPPINE banking has a “double-book” system allowing companies to present two financial statements—one for computing taxes and another for loan applications.

Industrialist Raul T. Concepcion said unscrupulous firms cheat the government out of billions of pesos in taxes by undervaluing their income and assets in the books they submit to the Bureau of Internal Revenue to reduce their tax dues.

These same companies present a different set of books to banks, reflecting the true value of their income and properties, to get a higher loan or a sizable collateral value. “It’s a practice long tolerated by banks because they don’t want to lose clients by toughening up their lending requirements. I think it’s time the President looked into this,” he said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo’s move ordering all agencies not to deal with private contractors that do not present their income tax returns as proof of their tax payments was commendable, Concepcion said.

However, it was not enough.

“She can bar tax cheats from bidding for government contracts but this would not stop them from getting loans from banks and getting away [with] not paying the right taxes,” he said.

He suggested that all banks be mandated to base their loan approvals solely on BIR-certified income tax returns and financial statements.

By cutting off the tax cheats’ access to bank loans, Concepcion said, there would be less incentive for companies to create two different sets of financial books.

Raising government revenues should not only be about imposing new taxes, it should also be about plugging holes in the collection of existing taxes, he added.

After having only one of her eight revenue measures approved by Congress last year, the President was set to implement administrative measures to boost collections.

Recently, Ms Arroyo issued Executive Order No. 399 that would give companies a free pass from the BIR’s audit and investigation team by paying at least 20 percent more in income taxes this year.

Based on EO No. 399 signed yesterday, the BIR commissioner would determine what business entities were qualified to avail of the five-year program which the President said was “designed to reduce corruption and administrative costs while enhancing voluntary compliance.”

There were other safeguards in the EO. Qualified business units would be required to make a minimum tax payment for the next five years of at least 20 percent more than their previous year’s taxes.

They should make sure that their tax payments for the first and last quarters were 25 percent higher than their year-ago levels. The ratio of their tax payments to gross sales for the whole year and for the first quarter should also be equal to their year-ago levels.

The ratio of the net value-added tax or business to gross sales should be no lower than the previous year’s or the industry benchmark, whichever is higher.

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4 Indonesian 'big fish' bombers hunted in RP

PHILIPPINE security forces are hunting four Indonesian militant "big fish," including two suspects in the October 2002 Bali bombing, in a marshy region on Mindanao island, an intelligence official said yesterday.

Philippine officials say there are nearly three dozen Indonesian and Malaysian militants hiding and training with a rogue faction of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the largest Moro rebel group in the country.

"There is an ongoing manhunt operation in central Mindanao," said Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan, head of the Philippine National Police Intelligence Group. "We're after the big fish."

Military officials and analysts say that members of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network, which was blamed for the Bali bombing, regularly use Mindanao for training and refuge with the assistance of at least some MILF factions.

An Army commander told Reuters the United States had been sharing intelligence with the Philippines to help capture four foreign militants, including two Indonesians named Umar Patek and Dulmatin, both suspected of involvement in the Bali bombing.

Shielded by MILF?

He said the four militants were thought to be hiding with a radical MILF faction in Maguindanao.

Sidney Jones, Southeast Asia director for the International Crisis Group, earlier this month cited Indonesian intelligence sources as saying that Umar Patek and Dulmatin were the targets of a Philippine Air Force strike last Nov. 18 in Central Mindanao.

Jones said the two suspected Bali bombers were not JI members but belonged to a little known Indonesian militant group called Banten, named after a port town in West Java and which operated independently from the al-Qaida-linked JI.

Jemaah cells

She said at least 45 foreign militants could be hiding in Mindanao. About half of them belonged to JI cells while the rest were from four to five other Indonesian militant groups.

US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone said 70 US Special Forces members were now in Mindanao working with Philippine troops to pinpoint the location of foreign militants and rebel forces.

Saudi national held

Philippine officials said they were currently holding a Saudi national on suspicion that he was involved in a destabilization plot in Mindanao.

Mohammad Abdullah Sughayer was detained at the Zamboanga City airport on Jan. 18 and flown to the national police headquarters in Manila.

"We have intelligence reports of his [connection] with certain activities in Mindanao which we think are detrimental to our security," said Faizal Hussin, an officer of the immigration bureau's intelligence division.

Hussin said Sughayer had come in and out of the country several times and that the Saudi said he was in the country for "humanitarian work." *Reuters, AFP*

DTI probes 2 firms for alleged pyramiding

From page A1

guised as multilevel marketing (MLM) ventures.

Under probe for alleged violation of the Consumer Act of the Philippines are JC Martin Corp. and First Quadrant Philippines Inc., one of 22 MLM companies which the DTI has been investigating since 2003 for alleged involvement in pyramiding schemes.

The managing director and corporate secretary of First Quadrant is identified on the company's website as Julie Rose Tamtacan Defensor, wife of Environment Secretary Michael Defensor.

In a phone interview, however, Secretary Defensor said he was "not part of the company in any way" and that his wife was just "an employee who resigned last year." The photos of the Defensor couple, however, are still featured on the First Quadrant website. Defensor himself had been featured in early First Quadrant catalogues as an "endorser."

Expressing surprise over the DTI announcement, First Quadrant said in a press statement that it "was cleared twice of this issue by no less than DTI Assistant Director Jaime Lasaro L. Olmos, first on Sept. 19 and second on Dec. 22, 2003."

First Quadrant supplied the INQUIRER a copy of a memorandum from Olmos, dated Dec. 22, 2003, which said the DTI "found no prima facie evidence to warrant" the filing of formal charges against the company.

"Following said clearances, First Quadrant was in fact admitted in October 2004 and became the first Filipino MLM company to become a member of the prestigious Multi Level Marketing International Association (MLMIA)," the company said. The MMMIA is based in Newport Beach, California.

"Establishing credentials with the MLMIA are stricter and more stringent than with the DTI because members must comply not only with state laws but also with US federal laws," it said.

Preliminary investigation

"First Quadrant prides itself as the first Filipino MLM company legally allowed to operate in California in the same league as similar US companies engaged in MLM such as Amway, Tupperware, Avon and Forever Living," the company said.

The DTI's Anti-Pyramiding Task Force will conduct preliminary investigations of the operations of JC Martin Corp. and First Quadrant. If the special hearing officer of the Bureau of Trade Regulation and Consumer Protection (BTRCP) determines that there is strong evidence against JC Martin and First Quadrant, the cases will be submitted to the Office of Legal Affairs for formal hearings.

Executive Order No. 913 empowers the DTI to proceed with a formal investigation independent of pending criminal or civil suits against companies involving violations of trade and industry laws.

If found guilty by the DTI, the two companies may be meted out various administrative penalties, including an order to stop their pyramiding operations, a fine of between P500 and P150,000 plus a maximum of P1,000 for each day of continuing violation, cancellation or suspension of permits from the DTI, and other damages.

Pedro Vicente C. Mendoza, a lawyer assigned to the BTRCP, said JC Martin had submitted its position paper on the charges while First Quadrant was expected to submit its paper by Feb. 2. The next hearing on the JC Martin case was set on Jan. 26, while that for First Quadrant was set on Feb. 11.

Mendoza said JC Martin and First Quadrant had been directed to remove from their business plans the earning options that the task force found to be pyramiding in nature.

Article 53 of the Consumer Act prohibits the use of chain distribution plans or pyramid sales schemes in the sale of consumer products. The law defines pyramiding as "sales devices whereby a person, on condition that he makes an investment, is granted by the manufacturer (or its representative) the right to recruit for profit one or more additional persons" who are then granted similar rights if they themselves invest money.

Trade Undersecretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said using the MLM or networking scheme to sell products or services was not illegal in itself.

"But (as the law says further), when the scheme is used in a way that income is generated primarily from recruiting others into the company instead of selling products, it becomes pyramiding," Cristobal said.

First Quadrant

Unlike the high-profile First Quadrant, little is known about the operations of JC Martin.

First Quadrant's website identified the other incorporators of the company as Andison U. Chua, Carlos G. Tumpalan, Socrates S. Tumpalan and Rhodora Tamtacan Tumpalan, a sister-in-law of the environment secretary.

According to First Quadrant's website, the company was formed on Jan. 8, 2002 and was "an instant success in just one year."

"On its first and second year, First Quadrant earned the 2002 and 2003 National Consumers Choice Award for Top Multi-Level Marketing Company of the Year," it said.

Unlike similar MLM companies, First Quadrant boasts that it sells only Filipino-made products. The backbone of its manufacturing arm is D. Tactacan Shoe Manufacturing, which was hailed as Best Shoe Manufacturer in the 2002 National Consumer Excellence Awards that was sponsored by the National Consumer Affairs Foundation.

First Quadrant also co-owns and manages the following companies—DTSF Leather Supply, DOYEE Shoes, New Shoes Philippines Inc. and Newport Fashion Circle Corp.

Also, the company supplies shoes for the following brands—Oleg Cassini, Lady Rustan's, SM Elegance, Milani, Styletto, Chateu Bourghesi, Rebecca Taylor (New York). *With a report from Volt Contreras*

IN THE KNOW

What is 'pyramiding'?

Pyramiding is prohibited in the sale of consumer products under Republic Act No. 7394 or the Consumer Protection Act.

The law defines a "pyramid sales scheme" or "chain distribution plan" as a scheme that bestows on a person, on condition that he invests, the right to recruit for profit one or more persons who will also be granted such right when they invest.

It does not matter what form or structure the system takes, so long as the person employing such a scheme derives profits primarily from recruitment. *PDI Research*

SOURCES: RA 7394, PDI ARCHIVES

Palace, solons rebuff reported US spy branch

From page A1

Branch—had been operating in Iraq, Afghanistan and other undisclosed locations for about two years.

Potential targets

An early planning memo to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, who reportedly created the unit, said its focus was on "emerging target countries," such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Somalia, Yemen and Georgia.

The small clandestine teams provide the US military's elite Special Operations units with battlefield intelligence using advanced technology, help recruit spies in foreign countries, and scout potential targets, The New York Times said, quoting unnamed senior Pentagon officials.

The teams represent a prime example of Rumsfeld's desire to expand the Pentagon's ability to gather human intelligence—information gathered by spies rather than by technological means, both within the military services and the Defense Intelligence Agency, whose focus is on intelligence used in the battlefield.

Stepping up intelligence

"It is accurate and should not be surprising that the Department of Defense is attempting to improve its long-standing human intelligence capability," Pentagon spokesperson Lawrence Di Rita said Sunday.

"A principal conclusion of the 9/11 Commission report is that the US human intelligence capability must be improved across the board," he said, referring to the US panel which looked into possible intelligence failures before the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States.

Asked if the United States needed to ask clearance before the clandestine teams could operate in the Philippines, Ebdane said: "They have to register with us."

He said he was not aware of any official report about such an American espionage arm.

"We want to find out how it is organized," Ebdane said, adding that he had, however, no plans to take the matter up officially with American authorities.

Ricciardone should explain

The US media reports did not say why the Philippines would be a target, but the United States has long expressed concern over the insurgencies confronting President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration, including the communist New People's Army and the Moro separatist rebels.

Beltran said US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone should brief congressmen and senators about any entry of American spy experts in the country.

"Who are they reporting their information to and against whom is the information?" asked Beltran.

"The US has long been known to foment war between military and political factions in nations where they interfere and, in the process, insinuate itself and its policies even deeper," he said.

Covert operations

Virador urged Ms Arroyo to assert Philippine independence.

"It is highly possible that covert operations of US operatives in the Philippines would not be limited to intelligence gathering but would also include assassinations and bombings to create a scenario of terror and justify US armed involvement in the country," Virador said.

He said it only showed how contemptuous the United States was of the country's independence.

Some intelligence experts said the creation of the new unit is the latest chapter in a long-running battle for intelligence dominance between Rumsfeld's Defense Department and the CIA, the Times said.

"This is really a giant turf battle," said Walter P. Lang, a former head of the Defense Human Intelligence Service, a branch of the Defense Information Agency.

US backing for GMA

Among the CIA's concerns, former intelligence officials have said, were that an expanded Pentagon role in intelligence-gathering could, by design or effect, escape the strict congressional oversight imposed by law on such operations when they are carried out by intelligence agencies, the Times said.

But other analysts said the teams are merely the latest incarnation of espionage units that the Army, Navy and Air Force operated throughout the Cold War to recruit spies, debrief defectors and gather information about foreign weapons systems in countries like China and the Soviet Union.

Speaking at a forum yesterday with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, Ricciardone praised the Arroyo administration for its fight against terrorism and corruption, and pledged continued support for it.

'Bombers will lose'

"When our friends are strong and secure, we, too, are stronger and more secure," Ricciardone said. "We are on the side of the government of the Philippines, no question about it, when it comes to combating terrorism."

While the ongoing peace negotiations to end the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's 28-year insurgency were welcome, Ricciardone said Washington would provide military support against those continuing to carry out attacks.

"What we want to see is a peace (agreement) that will be durable and that will permit development to go ahead," he said.

But if certain elements of the MILF were "going to hide bombers from Bali, or train bombers or hide kidnappers, or get involved in the drug trade, the law enforcement and security forces of the Philippines are going to go after them and we are going to help them," Ricciardone said.

"We are going to help, we are going to keep making inroads, and the kidnappers and bombers at the end of the day are going to lose." *With reports from The New York Times, AP and AFP*

CAPALLA

Shun gambling money, Church personnel told

From page A1

the Philippines maintains this stand on the controversial issue of receiving money from gamblers and gambling institutions.

It reiterated its collective policy during the close of its 90th plenary assembly on Sunday by denouncing illegal gambling and fighting its expansion in different forms.

The body also instructed all the clergy and Church personnel to refrain from soliciting or receiving funds from legal or illegal gambling.

"We express great sorrow if individual religious leaders and/or institutions had solicited funds for charitable purposes from public monies gained from legal gambling," the CBCP said in a statement issued on Sunday and signed by its president, Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla.

Confusion

Yesterday, Capalla apologized for the confusion brought about by statements made by the CBCP's legal officer that some bishops and priests might have benefited from gambling funds.

"We're sorry for the confusion it has caused, but we will not apologize for anything else because we did not do anything wrong," Capalla said in a press conference at the CBCP office in Manila.

"We categorically deny that the CBCP as a body has ever solicited or knowingly received funds from illegal gamblers," he said in a separate statement.

Some 85 bishops from all over the Philippines attended the plenary assembly's first conference this year at the Pope Pius Center in Manila.

Credibility attacks

The gathering was held amid what Capalla called "attacks on the credibility and integrity" of the CBCP after lawmakers questioned its legal officer on the probability of dirty money flowing into the Catholic Church.

Capalla stressed that no member of the CBCP had received money from illegal gambling, but he admitted that the conference was not aware of the dealings of individual bishops and the priests in their dioceses.

"As pastors who deeply care for the poor, we would be first not to judge their consciences on this matter. It is most unfortunate that in our situation of poverty today, public funds gained from legal gambling are often the only resource for the poor to be assisted adequately," the CBCP statement said.

"Even if (it is for helping), the CBCP does not encourage this manner of helping the poor. It could easily be construed as approving and promoting the culture of gambling and thereby scandalize the faithful," it said.

The bishops have expressed varying, even conflicting views, on gambling, particularly on jueteng, an illegal numbers game that is popular among the poor.

Former CBCP president Oscar Cruz leads the national crusade against jueteng, but another official, Caloocan Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez, is in favor of legalizing jueteng in order to derive more revenues.

Capalla admitted in an earlier interview that he himself had referred poor constituents to government institutions operating legal gambling, including casinos, and offering aid to the poor.

Church teaching

The CBCP president said the Church has been teaching that "games of chance or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice."

"This moral teaching does not prohibit some forms of gambling in certain situations. In consequence, it does not prohibit people or institutions, even church-related ones, from receiving benefits from such gambling," the CBCP said.

"However, applying the moral principle to the specific Philippine situation, the CBCP has deemed it necessary to state that the form of gambling that is organized, widespread and systemic, whether legal or illegal, is not desirable," it said.

Jueteng is reportedly a P30-billion business in the Philippines. Legalized forms of gambling, such as lotto and bingo, are huge fund-raisers for the government.

Correction

IN THE JAN. 23 issue, a story on Page A6—"Bangon takes up cudgels for mayor"—misstated the name of the deputy director general of Bangon Pilipinas, the political party of evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva. The correct name of the Bangon Pilipinas deputy director general is Rolando "Dong" Cucio—not Richard Cucio.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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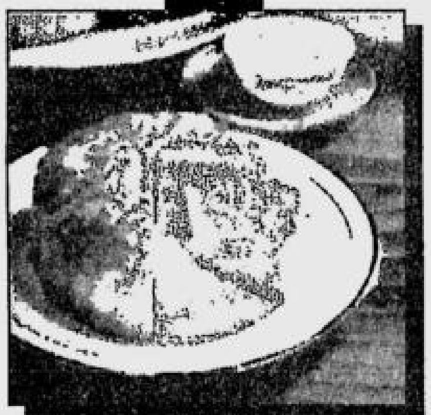

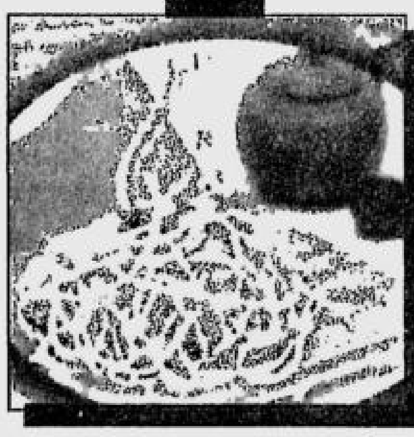

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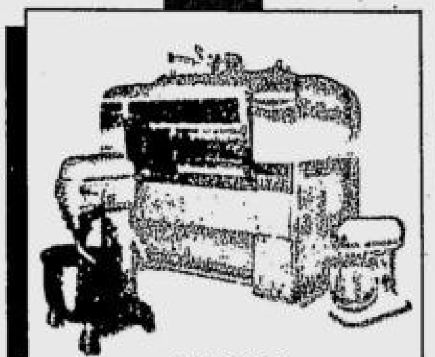
Technology Beyond the Usual



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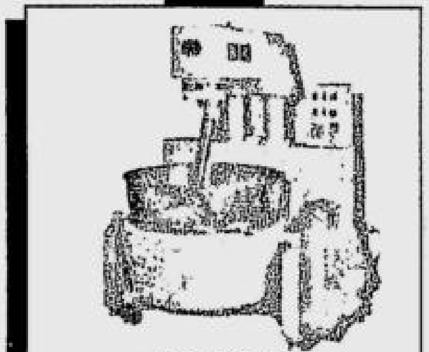

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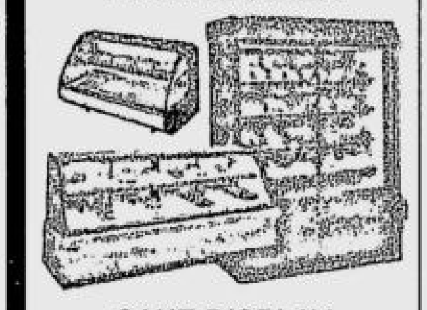

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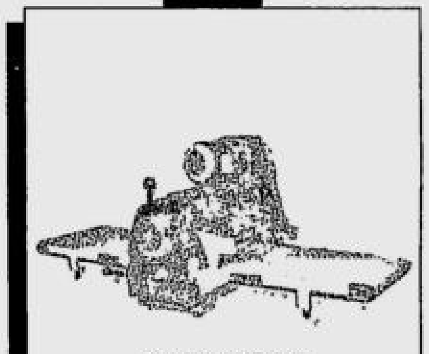

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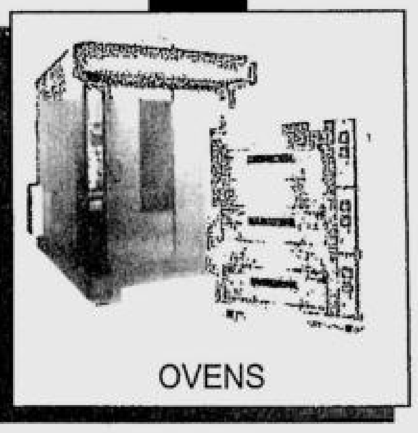

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Strong quake panics tsunami-hit Indonesia

Aceh rebels prepare for truce and rebuilding

JAKARTA—Indonesia was rocked by a powerful earthquake Monday that caused panic and damaged dozens of homes, as the government and Aceh's separatist rebels prepared to suspend a decades-long civil war in the interest of helping rebuild the tsunami-shattered province.

The epicenter of the 6.2-magnitude quake—far to the east of Aceh—was determined to be under the central part of Sulawesi island, said Suharjono, a seismologist in Jakarta who goes by a single name. The pre-dawn quake did not spawn a tsunami.

Thousands of people ran to higher ground in the city of Palu, where police said about 30 wooden houses were damaged, and patients at the main Undata hospital fled the building.

"They were shouting 'water, water' because they feared waves," said Dr. Riri Lamadjido, adding that the hospital had received no injured patients as a result of the quake.

On Dec. 26, Indonesia's western Sumatra island was struck by a much more powerful 9.0-magnitude earthquake, triggering waves that killed anywhere from 162,000 to 228,000 people in 11 countries around the Indian Ocean.

A month after the disaster, people remained anxious and nervous even in areas not directly affected.

In an inland province west of Thailand's capital, thousands fled their homes early Monday after rumors spread that a new earthquake had opened cracks in four major hydroelectric dams that were about to break open and flood the region.

The governor of Kanchanaburi province went on the radio and the head of the government agency in charge of dams held a news conference to try to reassure people that the rumors were false and urge them to return home.

The number of relief camps in Indonesia's Aceh province has dropped by about 75 percent in the past week, a UN official said Monday.

The "dramatic decrease" in the camps—from 385 to less than 100—was good news because relief settlements can cause survivors to become too dependent on outside help, said Joel Boutroue, head of UN relief efforts in Aceh.

Most people were moving in with relatives, and a few were returning to their villages along the devastated west coast, he said.

To smooth the delivery of aid to hundreds of thousands of survivors, governments in the two worst-hit nations of Indonesia and Sri Lanka were trying on Monday to ease tensions with indigenous rebel movements that threatened to hold up supplies.

Indonesian officials agreed to meet with Aceh rebel leaders later this week in Finland to negotiate a ceasefire in the province, where separatists have been fighting for an independent homeland for nearly 30 years, according to Finland's Crisis Management Initiative, headed by former President Martti Ahtisaari.

"There is a hope that the scale of the disaster and the movement for rebuilding Aceh will help lead to social and political reconciliation between Indonesia and (the rebels)," said Dewi Anwar Fortuna, a prominent analyst and a former Indonesian presidential adviser.

Despite an informal ceasefire announced by both sides since the disaster, there have been isolated reports of fighting, raising concerns about the security of relief operations in Aceh. On Sunday, the Indonesian military said it had killed 200 alleged rebels in the last four weeks.

In Sri Lanka, Norway's foreign minister met separately with the country's prime minister and a top guerrilla leader over the weekend to help resolve a dispute over aid distribution in the island nation, where the tsunami killed about 31,000 people and displaced another 1 million.

The Tamil Tigers have repeatedly accused the government of obstructing aid deliveries to rebel-controlled areas in Sri Lanka's north and east—allegations the government denies.

At Norway's urging, the two sides agreed to discuss the creation of a joint body that would ensure relief is fairly disbursed. If they do agree to such cooperation, it would represent serious progress in a conflict that has lingered for two decades. *AP*

Displaced endangered turtles find new nests

PORT BLAIR, India—Helicopters scouring a devastated Indian island have sighted endangered sea turtles and they are nesting again at new locations a month after the tsunamis wrecked their habitat.

Coast Guard spokesperson Commandant Sanjay Anchalwal said Monday that olive ridley and leatherback turtles were spotted at Indira Point off the ravaged island of Campbell Bay, the southern-most tip of India.

Campbell Bay lies just 163 km from Banda Aceh in Indonesia, the epicenter of the Dec. 26 undersea earthquake that sent tsunami waves crashing across Asian shores.

The remote island, one of more than 500 in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago, bore the full fury of the towering waves that submerged Indira Point and washed away turtle nesting places.

"A Coast Guard helicopter Friday sighted turtle nesting for the first time since the disaster," the spokesman said, adding that the turtles had shifted their breeding grounds some 10 km from the original location.

"The nesting site has shifted from the original ground called South Bay Galathia river to a newly-formed beach at Indira Point," Anchalwal added.

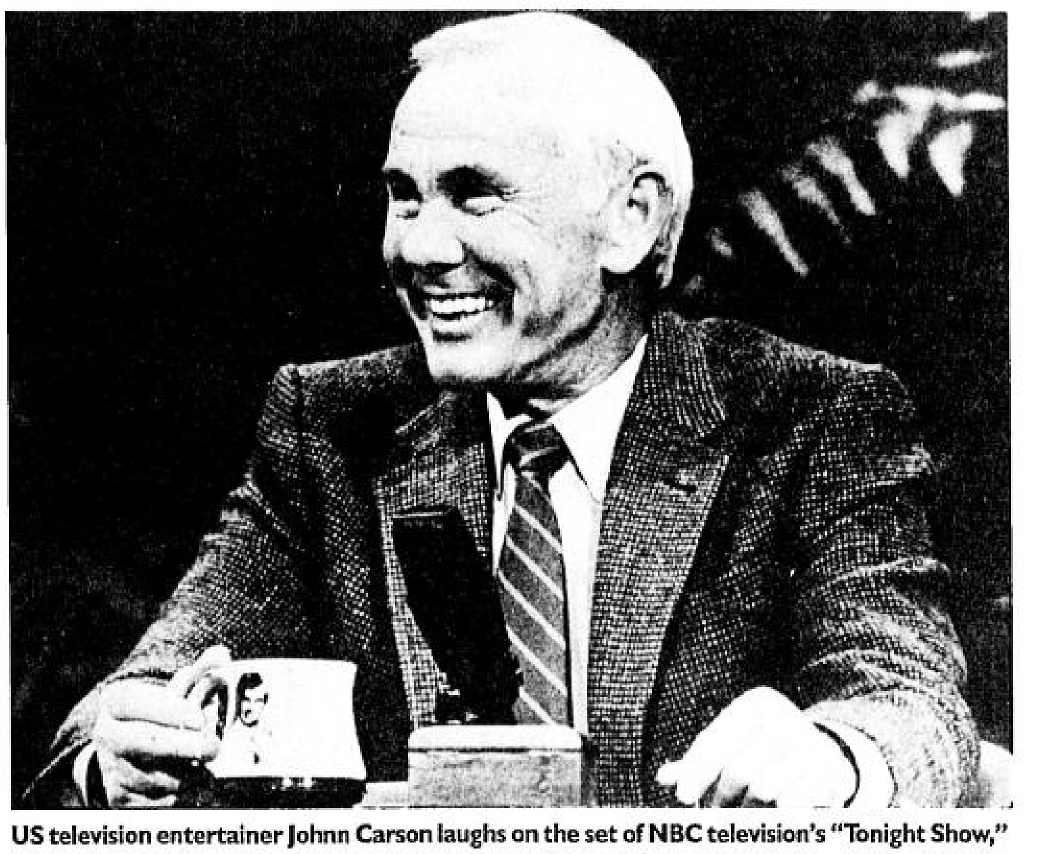
"Some 20 tracks are visible and a ground team has also found newly laid eggs," he said. Old nests appeared to have been smashed by the waves and the turtles settled among debris washed ashore at the new location on Indira Point.

However the primitive, protected animals which co-existed with the dinosaurs, were not sighted in large numbers.

"Our men could locate only four to five turtles while in peak season earlier we have noticed 15-20 turtles every day coming ashore to lay eggs," added coast guard official Pankaj Verma.

The original breeding site known as "Point 41" is completely deserted and half submerged in the sea following the devastation.

Six turtle researchers from the western Indian city of Pune and 16 local lighthouse personnel are still missing from Indira Point since Dec. 26. *AFP*



US television entertainer John Carson laughs on the set of NBC television's "Tonight Show," in this undated photo. AFP

Johnny Carson, former host of 'Tonight Show,' dead at 79

LOS ANGELES—Johnny Carson, a pioneer of late night television comedy as the long-time host of NBC television's "Tonight Show," died on Sunday at the age of 79.

Carson, who stepped down as host of the "Tonight Show" in 1992, when he was replaced by current host Jay Leno, died of emphysema, NBC reported. He had been in poor health for several years and underwent quadruple bypass surgery in 1999.

Carson interviewed thousands of actors, singers, politicians and other celebrities during his 5,000 ground-breaking NBC shows including John Lennon and Paul McCartney, Muhammad Ali, Richard Nixon, Diana Ross, Barbra Streisand and Judy Garland.

A number of comedians, including Jerry Seinfeld, Joan Rivers and Bette Midler, got their start appearing on the "Tonight Show." Guests remembered Carson as a generous host, especially helpful to rising stars.

"He had the mechanism to make you shine," eight-time guest Jackie Mason told CNN.

"You looked 10 times better on his show than on anybody else's show.

Carson's final guests were singer Bette Midler and comedian Robin Williams. His last show was seen by 50 million viewers across the United States, according to NBC.

"He was a little bit of devil and a whole lot of angel," Midler told CNN.

Carson had hosted the "Tonight Show" since 1962, when he replaced Jack Paar.

Carson's 10-minute opening comedy monologues, announced by Ed McMahon's cry of "Heeeerreees Johnny!" set the standard for late night comedy.

Carson was inducted into Television Hall of Fame in 1987 and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1992.

John William Carson was born Oct. 23, 1925 in Iowa and raised in Nebraska. He began his career at 14, as "The Great Carsoni" before the Norfolk, Nebraska Rotary Club. After World War II, Carson studied at the University of Nebraska and became a radio disk jockey in Omaha.

In the state capital, he was in position to join WOW's television station, with Carson telling jokes and staging skits on his own show, the Squirrel's Nest.

He launched a similar show in Los Angeles, and hosted the great comedians of the day: Groucho Marx, Fred Allen and Red Skelton, who hired Carson as a writer.

Skelton, a vaudeville veteran, had a variety show with a rehearsal that went awry, injuring Skelton and giving Carson a chance to replace him on air.

Carson's nationwide success was not assured, however, after his own show flopped and he hosted game shows for a while.

Still, Carson's personality shone through and Jack Paar, host of the wildly popular "Tonight Show," asked Carson to substitute for him and eventually to take over the show.

Carson's humbler, Midwestern personality proved ultimately more suited to the small screen than raucous vaudeville pratfalls and skits. While comedians normally stood, Carson sat at a desk to interview his guests, a format still used by Leno—and several competitors. Carson's banter with his bandleader, Carl "Doc" Severinsen, was also widely copied, by David Letterman, for one. *AFP*

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Car bomb attack targets Allawi office

BAGHDAD—A suicide car bomb smashed into a checkpoint near Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's party offices in Baghdad Monday, a day after Iraq's most wanted man vowed to wreck next week's landmark polls.

Ten people were wounded, three of them policemen, when a vehicle driven by a suicide bomber rammed into the heavily guarded police checkpoint leading to Allawi's Iraqi National Accord headquarters, police and medical sources said.

The attack came a day after al-Qaida frontman Abu Musab al-Zarqawi claimed to have kidnapped and killed a member of the party who was also a leading candidate on Allawi's list for the Jan. 30 elections.

"Your brothers in al-Qaida's organization in the Land of Two Rivers (Iraq) managed to assassinate Salem Jaafar al-Kanani, secretary of the traitor Allawi," said the statement, whose authenticity could not be confirmed.

The political director of Allawi's Iraqi National Accord party told AFP that Kanani, who was on the INA's parliament list, had been kidnapped on Wednesday.

In a separate audio message posted on the Internet, Zarqawi said next Sunday's election was a "wicked trap aimed at putting the Rafidha (a derogatory term for Shiite Muslims) in the seat of power in Iraq."

It was the second inflammatory message from al-Qaida's supremo in Iraq since Thursday as he sought to maximize violence among the country's fractious mix of Shiites and Sunnis ahead of the vote.

Rebels rallied to Zarqawi's call over the weekend as car bombs tore apart a Shiite mosque and wedding party in the Baghdad region on Saturday, killing nearly 30 people.

US Army paratroopers prepare to raid a house during an operation in central Baghdad Jan. 24. REUTERS

But Allawi told the BBC Sunday: "We believe the elections themselves will help in putting an end to violence by fighting terrorists."

The US ambassador in Baghdad John Negroponte was equally upbeat about the milestone general elections and predicted high turnout, stressing that participation in the country's troubled Sunni heartland was not the only measure of success.

"I don't think we should allow the question of Sunni turnout to be the arbiter, if you will, of the legitimacy of this election," Negroponte said in an interview from Baghdad with the Fox News Sunday television program.

"I think we have to be very careful about that," he said. "And to me the important thing is that the election will be taking place and I suspect there will be very wide participation."

The latest violence in trouble spots north of Baghdad left 10 people dead as well a three US soldiers wounded in a string of attacks Sunday and an al-Qaida-linked group released a video purporting to show the execution of an Iraqi soldier in Mosul.

The electoral commission in Mosul has less than half of the personnel it will need to staff polling stations in that northern city, provincial director Khalid Kazar said.

Despite the chaos, the US military continued its nationwide sweep for suspects, netting over 100 since Saturday.

Seeking to stave off an election-day bloodbath, Interior Minister Falah Naquib has announced a tough package of security measures that will effectively seal Iraq off from the outside world for the vote.

The New York Times quoted a report by retired four-star army general Gary Luck advising the US military to quicken the training of security forces by assigning thousands of US military trainers to work directly with Iraqi units.

Meanwhile, eight Chinese hostages who were handed back to the Chinese authorities in Baghdad were preparing to leave the war-torn country on Monday. *AFP*

US northeast digging out from snowstorm

NEW YORK — The northeastern United States on Monday was digging out from a blizzard, ranked among the five worst in the past century, that was linked to at least 18 deaths in eight states.

The storm, which started in the midwest Friday, dumped 30 cm of snow in Detroit, 35 cm in New York City, and close to a meter in parts of Massachusetts.

At least 18 deaths in eight states were linked to the storm, including a 10-year-old girl struck by a snowplow as she played on a snowbank in New York, reports said.

The governors of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Jersey declared emergencies in their states, warning people to stay home to facilitate road clearance on Monday. Boston area schools were to be closed until Wednesday.

Boston's Logan International Airport remained closed early Monday. Thousands of flights were delayed or canceled at airports in northeastern and midwestern US states as residents dug out from the first major snowstorm of the year. *AFP*

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Yushchenko heads for tricky talks with Putin

MOSCOW—Ukraine's new president flies to Moscow on Monday to spell out to an uneasy President Vladimir Putin just how far he will go in steering his country toward the West and away from its traditional partner Russia.

Russian commentators, ahead of the Kremlin talks scheduled for the second half of the day, expected Putin to quiz newly inaugurated Viktor Yushchenko over his economic and foreign policy plans.

"The list of the Kremlin questions for the new president of Ukraine is well known," commentator Natalya Alekseyeva wrote in the daily Izvestia.

"How will Ukraine's foreign policy be formed ? Who will head the government and its economic bloc? Which of (former president Leonid) Kuchma's promises will be kept and what will be forgotten about?" she said.

The lightning trip to the Kremlin fulfills Yushchenko's pledge to make Moscow his first port of call as president, to uphold Ukraine's links with its former imperial master and key trading partner.

It appeared also aimed at dispelling any lingering bitterness between the two men after the very public backing Putin gave for Yushchenko's defeated opponent in a bruising election campaign and mass street protests by Yushchenko's supporters.

Putin did not attend Yushchenko's inauguration on Sunday.

Yushchenko, due to embark on a whirlwind tour of western and central Europe later in the week, has stressed Russia remains a "strategic partner" for Ukraine. Ukraine relies heavily on Russian energy supplies.

But Russian commentators said the Kremlin would want to know how committed, if at all, Yushchenko was to forming a joint economic space with Russia and ex-Soviet Belarus and Kazakhstan—a loose concept pushed by Moscow.

Others said Yushchenko would be seeking assurances from Putin that Russia would not stir unrest in the Russian-speaking east of Ukraine, power base of Yushchenko's pro-Moscow rival.

Alekseyeva said both sides would take a pragmatic approach in Monday's talks. "Moscow and Kiev intend to put a brave face on a sorry mess," she wrote.

Yushchenko made his priorities clear in an address on Sunday to supporters in Kiev's Independence Square.

"Our way to the future is the way of a united Europe. We, along with the people of Europe, belong to one civilization. We share similar values," he told the crowd after taking the oath of office in parliament.

His impassioned 20-minute address made no mention of Russia, which ran Ukraine's affairs for three centuries until Kiev secured independence from Soviet rule by referendum in 1991.

Yushchenko has pledged to put right divisions between nationalist western Ukraine, which backed him, and the Russian-speaking east, which voted solidly for his opponent.

He has assured big eastern industrial towns that he will cater to Russia's needs.

The effect of Yushchenko's "orange revolution" on the political landscape of the old Soviet Union was reflected in a separate visit to Moscow by Kyrgyz leader Askar Akayev, also due on Monday.

Kyrgyzstan holds a parliamentary election at the end of February and a presidential poll in October. With rigged elections having been the catalyst for the Ukrainian and Georgian "revolutions," the Akayev leadership has shown signs of nervousness about the prospect of similar upheaval.

"Akayev's visit is taking place... to negotiate possible help from Moscow if events in Kyrgyzstan start developing along the lines of Ukraine," Kommersant newspaper wrote. *AP*

YUSHCHENKO watch a direct TV broadcast of his inauguration at the Independence Square, Kiev, Jan. 23. AP

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Reckless post-war spending seen prompting corruption

LONDON—The ravages of modern warfare are too often compounded by ill-conceived and expensive post-war reconstruction projects that fuel a "feeding frenzy" of corruption and profiteering, according to a UN-funded report.

The report, citing graft from Liberia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to Lebanon and Afghanistan, said the overwhelming international response after wars was simply to pump large amounts of money into rebuilding programs without proper control.

"What is difficult enough to try to manage in times of peace becomes even more problematic in post-war situations where the sheer scale of works... and the weakness of public oversight create opportunities for the corrupt of historic proportions," it said.

"This results in a 'feeding frenzy' and a free for all in which the interests of the victims of tragedy are frequently swept down the river," added the report, compiled by anticorruption organization Tiri for publication on Monday.

Too often, foreign contractors were brought in at vast expense to carry out work the local population could do more cheaply, with the money going directly into the local economy.

The report made no reference to current events in Iraq, which faces a huge task in rebuilding roads, bridges, factories and power and water services destroyed during the US-led invasion and by an insurrection in the months since.

But it cited repair of the Iraqi electricity grid after the 1991 Gulf War which was carried out by locals after the UN's initial proposals were rejected as being too expensive.

"Five billion dollars and fours years were not needed. Iraqis simply did it on their own," wrote Tiri co-chair Jeremy Carver.

Carver noted that modern warfare now tended to focus on destruction of the local infrastructure like electricity, roads and water supplies which then had to be rapidly repaired once hostilities ended.

The report noted widespread corruption in reconstruction works in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Liberia, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon and Sierra Leone among others and called on the international community to review its approach. *Reuters*

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Presyo ng kuryente sa 'Pinas, pinakamahal sa Asya?

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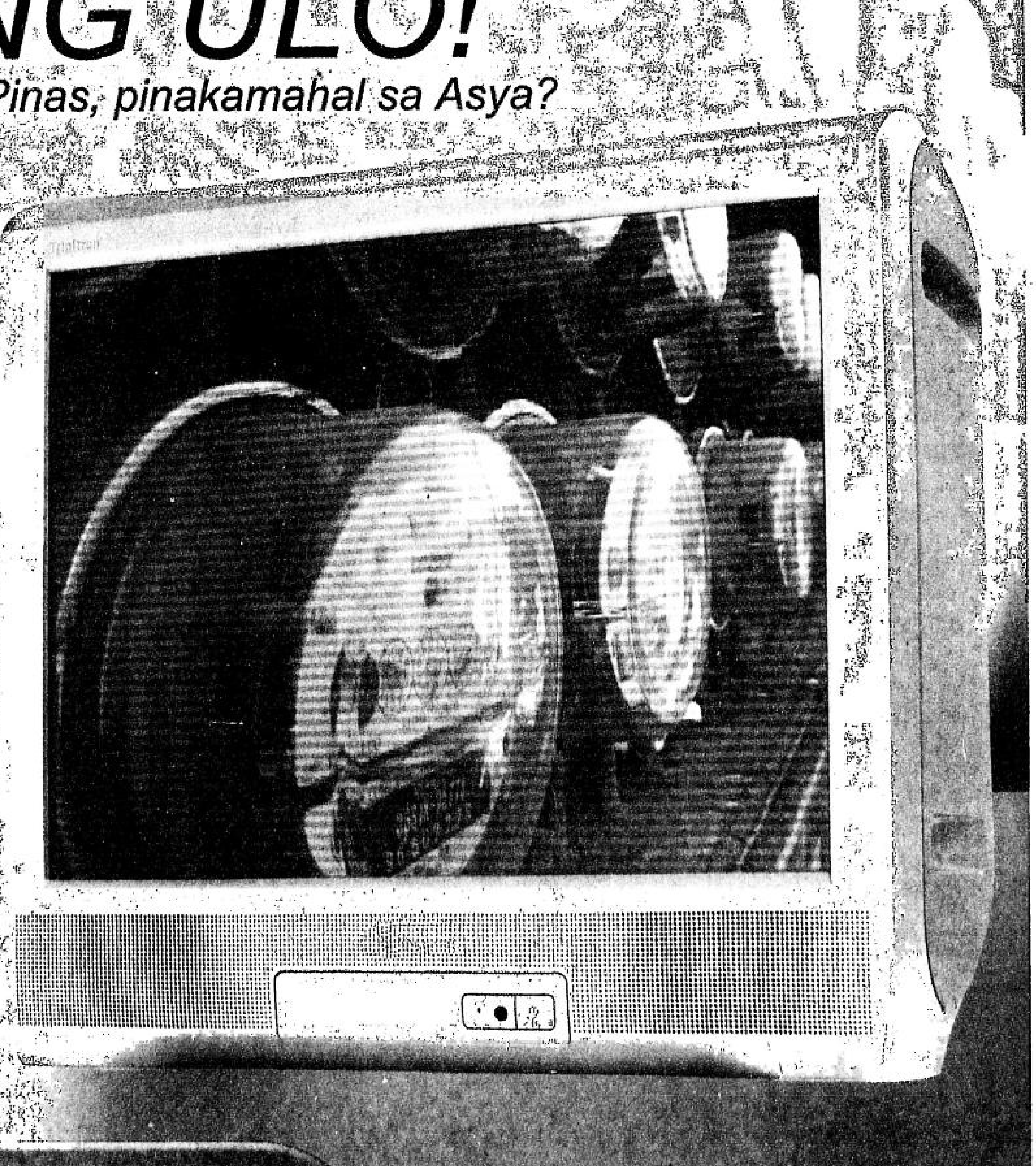

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Yushchenko heads for tricky talks with Putin

YUSHCHENKO watch a direct TV broadcast of his inauguration at the Independence Square, Kiev, Jan. 23. AP

MOSCOW—Ukraine's new president flies to Moscow on Monday to spell out to an uneasy President Vladimir Putin just how far he will go in steering his country toward the West and away from its traditional partner Russia.

Russian commentators, ahead of the Kremlin talks scheduled for the second half of the day, expected Putin to quiz newly inaugurated Viktor Yushchenko over his economic and foreign policy plans.

"The list of the Kremlin questions for the new president of Ukraine is well known," commentator Natalya Alekseyeva wrote in the daily Izvestia.

"How will Ukraine's foreign policy be formed ? Who will head the government and its economic bloc? Which of (former president Leonid) Kuchma's promises will be kept and what will be forgotten about?" she said.

The lightning trip to the Kremlin fulfills Yushchenko's pledge to make Moscow his first port of call as president, to uphold Ukraine's links with its former imperial master and key trading partner.

It appeared also aimed at dispelling any lingering bitterness between the two men after the very public backing Putin gave for Yushchenko's defeated opponent in a bruising election campaign and mass street protests by Yushchenko's supporters.

Putin did not attend Yushchenko's inauguration on Sunday.

Yushchenko, due to embark on a whirlwind tour of western and central Europe later in the week, has stressed Russia remains a "strategic partner" for Ukraine. Ukraine relies heavily on Russian energy supplies.

But Russian commentators said the Kremlin would want to know how committed, if at all, Yushchenko was to forming a joint economic space with Russia and ex-Soviet Belarus and Kazakhstan—a loose concept pushed by Moscow.

Others said Yushchenko would be seeking assurances from Putin that Russia would not stir unrest in the Russian-speaking east of Ukraine, power base of Yushchenko's pro-Moscow rival.

Alekseyeva said both sides would take a pragmatic approach in Monday's talks. "Moscow and Kiev intend to put a brave face on a sorry mess," she wrote.

Yushchenko made his priorities clear in an address on Sunday to supporters in Kiev's Independence Square.

"Our way to the future is the way of a united Europe. We, along with the people of Europe, belong to one civilization. We share similar values," he told the crowd after taking the oath of office in parliament.

His impassioned 20-minute address made no mention of Russia, which ran Ukraine's affairs for three centuries until Kiev secured independence from Soviet rule by referendum in 1991.

Yushchenko has pledged to put right divisions between nationalist western Ukraine, which backed him, and the Russian-speaking east, which voted solidly for his opponent.

He has assured big eastern industrial towns that he will cater to Russia's needs.

The effect of Yushchenko's "orange revolution" on the political landscape of the old Soviet Union was reflected in a separate visit to Moscow by Kyrgyz leader Askar Akayev, also due on Monday.

Kyrgyzstan holds a parliamentary election at the end of February and a presidential poll in October. With rigged elections having been the catalyst for the Ukrainian and Georgian "revolutions," the Akayev leadership has shown signs of nervousness about the prospect of similar upheaval.

"Akayev's visit is taking place... to negotiate possible help from Moscow if events in Kyrgyzstan start developing along the lines of Ukraine," Kommersant newspaper wrote. *AP*

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Iran: US attack on country would be a strategic error

TEHRAN—Iran, responding to comments by senior US officials, said on Sunday any US military attack on the country would be a strategic mistake and dismissed the US remarks as "psychological warfare."

US President George W. Bush last week said military action against Iran's nuclear program had not been ruled out and Vice President Dick Cheney said Iran topped the list of world trouble spots and Israel could decide to bomb its nuclear facilities.

But Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza Asefi said: "We think the chance (of a US military attack) is very low unless someone wants to make a major strategic mistake."

"Logically speaking, we don't think this is going to happen," he told a weekly news conference.

Iranian officials, including President Mohammad Khatami, said last week Iran would respond vigorously to any attack.

Analysts have said Tehran has ballistic missiles capable of striking Israel or US bases in the Gulf and can easily stir up violence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine through proxy agents and militant groups it backs.

Asefi, echoing comments by other senior Iranian officials, dismissed the US remarks as "psychological warfare."

"These kind of remarks are clear examples of cultural and religious war which will only lead to people's hatred of US policies ... and will isolate America more than before," he said.

An article in The New Yorker magazine this month said the United States was conducting secret reconnaissance missions in Iran to help identify potential nuclear, chemical and missile targets.

But Iranian Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi dismissed the report by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh.

"This person is crazy. He thinks Iran is chaotic and that whoever wants to enter the country, can easily do so," the ISNA students news agency quoted Yunesi as saying on Sunday. "If it was so, the Americans would have achieved their goals much sooner."

US Pentagon officials have said the New Yorker report was "riddled with errors."

Asefi said Cheney's comments about Israel attacking Iran's nuclear facilities underscored the influence Israel had on US foreign policy.

"Iran has always said that Tel Aviv decides US policies and that the Zionist lobby is so powerful in the United States, therefore we were not surprised by such remarks," he said.

Iran says its nuclear program is peaceful and will be used only to generate electricity, not to build atomic bombs.

"The Americans believe they can impose their demands and use force," Asefi said. *Reuters*

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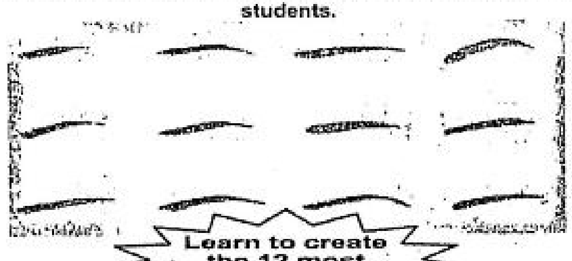

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Israel looks to US on Iran

JERUSALEM—Israel will follow the US lead in dealing with Iran's nuclear aspirations, Vice Premier Shimon Peres said Monday, but did not rule out military action if diplomatic and economic pressure fail to stop Tehran from developing nuclear weapons.

Last week, US Vice President Dick Cheney said there was a concern that if the Iranian program was not stopped, Israel would attack Iran's nuclear facilities and "let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterward."

Meir Dagan, the head of Israel's Mossad spy service, told lawmakers Monday that by the end of the year, Iran would have the technical ability and know-how to build a nuclear bomb, according to parliament spokesperson Giora Pordes.

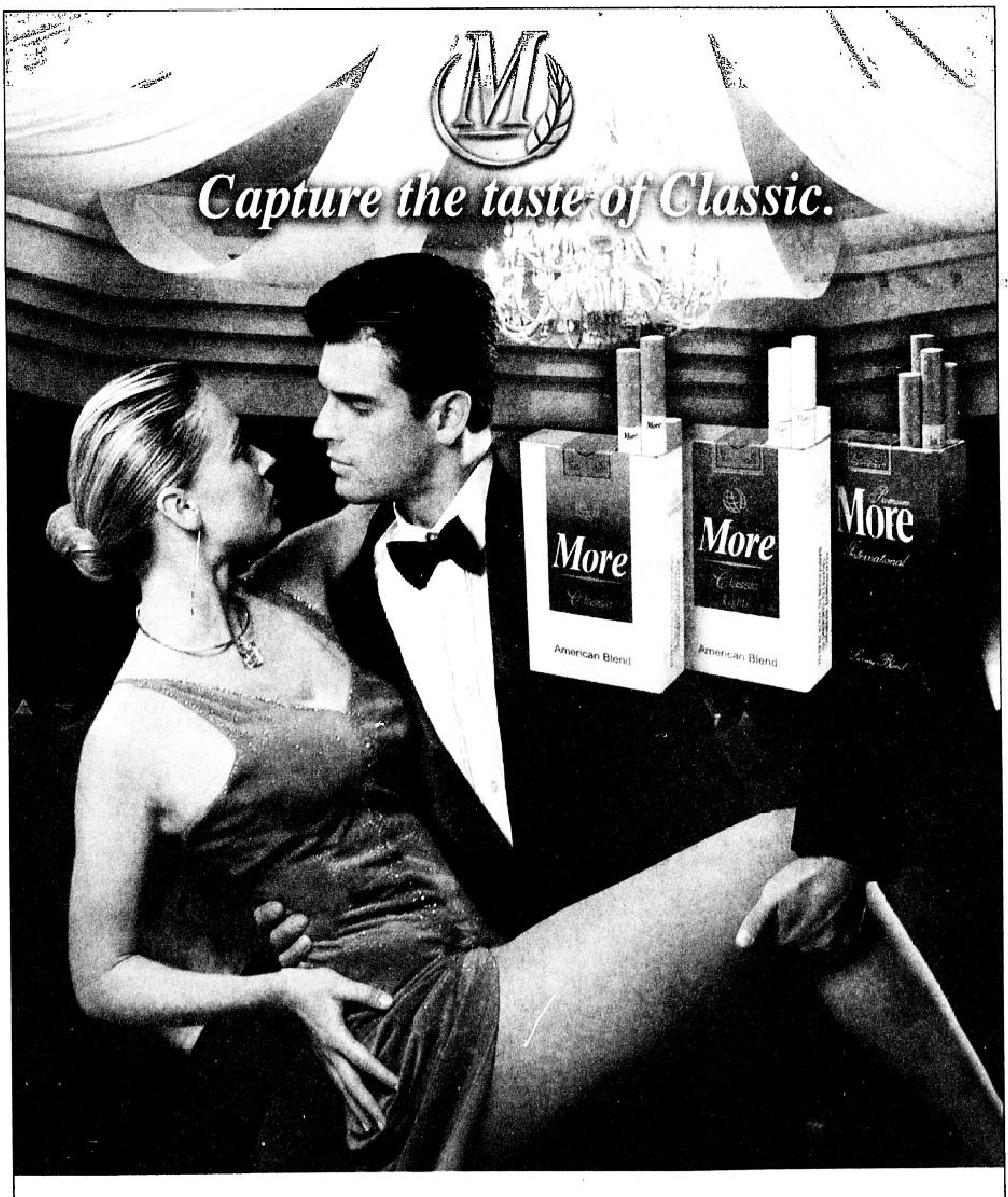
From that point, it would take only a year or two to actually develop the weapon, Dagan told a closed-door meeting in parliament.

Peres said he believes the United States would continue seeking a diplomatic solution, and that Israel would follow Washington's lead.

"The United States has to decide, not us," he told Israel Army Radio. "If we go it alone, we will remain alone. Everyone knows our potential but we also have to know our limits. As long as there is a possibility that the world will organize to fight against Iran's nuclear option, let the world organize."

In 1981, Israel bombed an Iraqi nuclear reactor under construction.

Asked whether he was ruling out the military option in dealing with Iran, Peres said: "No, I didn't say that." *AP*



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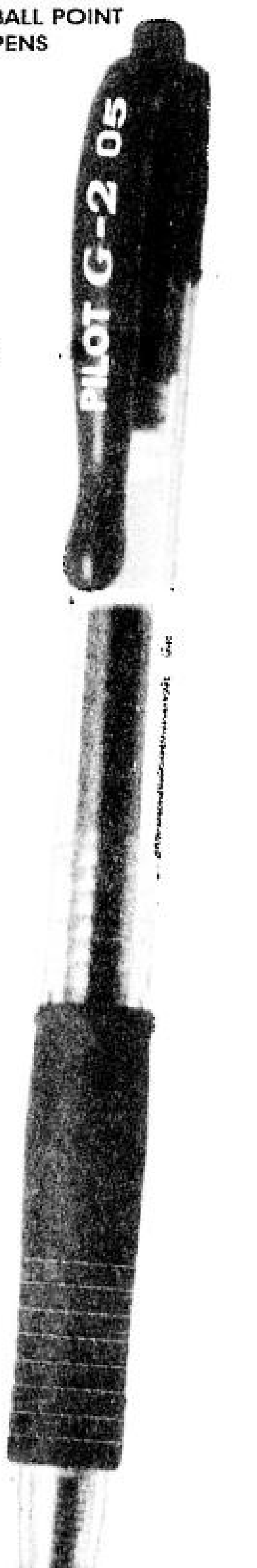

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Golden carrot

EDITORIAL

IT'S HARD to say if the highly publicized filing of graft cases against high-living internal revenue and customs officials has put the fear of the law in the hearts of their peers and the rank and file. What is clear is that it did not have the equally desirable effect of raising higher revenues for the debt-ridden national government, or at least not by as much as what the administration wanted. While the Bureau of Customs reported a P10-billion surplus vis-a-vis its collection target of P112 billion in 2004, the Bureau of Internal Revenue admitted that it was P6.3 billion short of its target of P470 billion, even though it was able to increase its collection by 10.2 percent over that of the precious year.

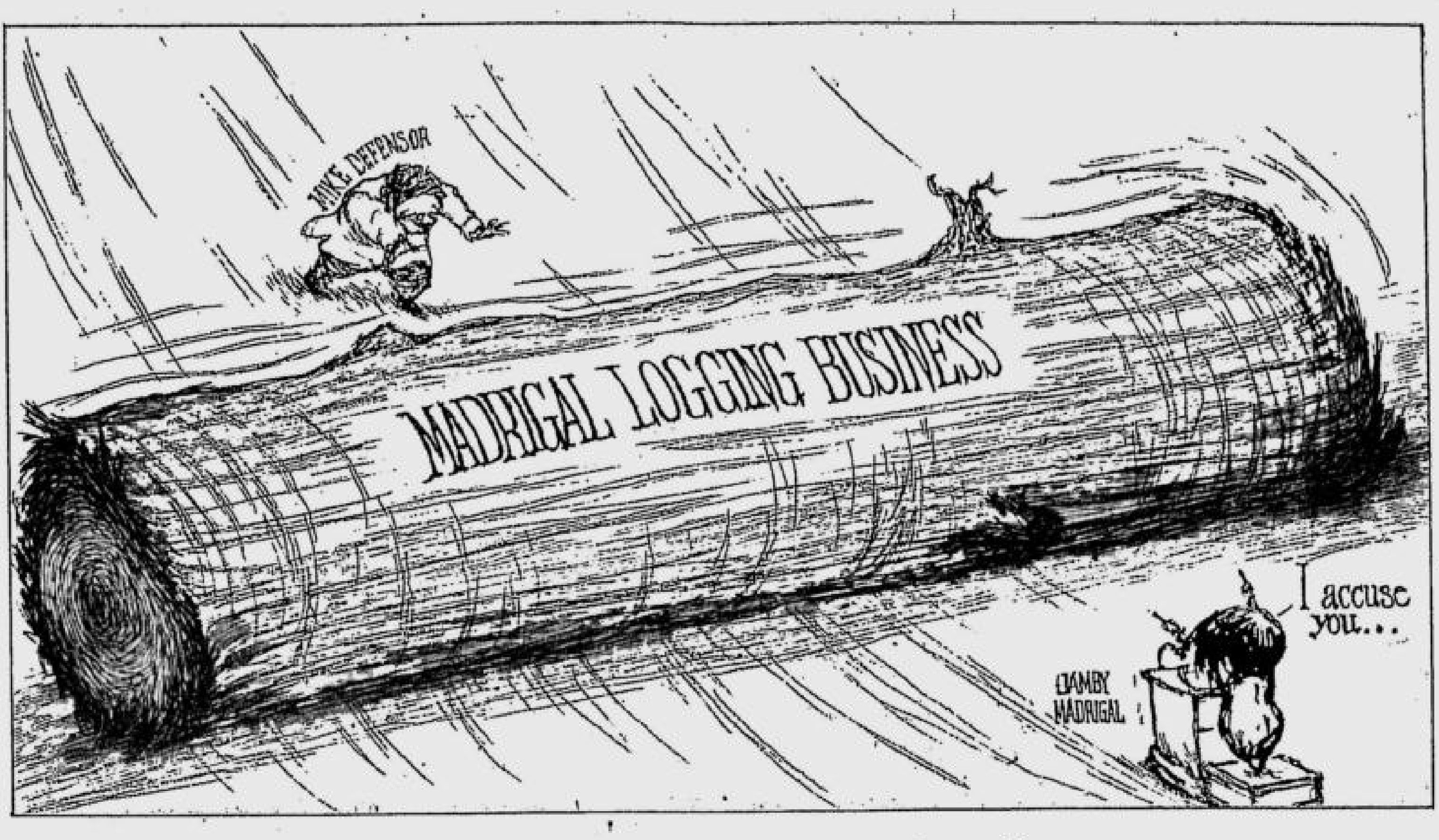
But even as the effectiveness of the stick of criminal prosecution still remains to seen, the administration has unveiled a carrot that ought to be as tempting as any enticement offered by smugglers, tax evaders and other criminal characters. A bill approved by Congress last week provides generous incentives to real achievers in the two revenue-collection arms of the government as well as punishment for those who fail to deliver.

Under the bill, which President Macapagal-Arroyo is set to sign today, officials and employees of the BIR and the BOC will get to share among themselves part of the revenues they collect in excess of the targets set by the Cabinet-level Development Budget Coordinating Committee (DBCC). Specifically, the agencies will get 15 percent of their extra collections if they exceed their targets by 30 percent, plus an additional 20 percent of any amount beyond that. For instance, had the bill been in place last year, customs officials and employees could have divided among themselves something like P1.5 billion for exceeding the target collection by P10 billion. That would have at least doubled or even tripled the incomes of everyone in the bureau, which had a budget of P1.12 billion last year.

Of course, getting 3—or even 10—times their present salaries would still not allow some grossly corrupt officials and employees to maintain their present lifestyles. On such incomes, they cannot afford to buy the kind of mansions and luxury vehicles that some of them have been found to own; or to go abroad as often as they wish. But any honest and hardworking civil servant would be happy to earn that kind of money, since it should be sufficient to provide a comfortable existence to any family of modest ambitions. It may not make anyone fabulously wealthy, but this system of rewards and incentives offers a way for those who work in two of the most corrupt government agencies an opportunity to earn much higher incomes honestly and on the basis of their actual work.

It is not as if the government is trying to squeeze blood from stone, by demanding higher collections and threatening dismissal of those who cannot deliver. There is plenty of room for improvement in the revenue collection effort. The National Tax Research Council, for instance, has estimated that the government loses more than P120 billion yearly on account of uncollected taxes. Smuggling, on the other hand, is said to cost the government P60 billion yearly in uncollected import duties and taxes. If the BIR and the BOC can recover a substantial part of such losses, then they should not only be able to achieve their targets but also earn enough to make everyone, except the really greedy, happy.

How much the workers will share by way of incentives will depend largely on the targets set by the DBCC. And in the first year of the program at least, the committee cannot go wrong if it sets targets that are on the conservative side if only to ensure that that there will be rewards to parcel out at the end of the year. This is necessary to demonstrate how the system works and provide a boost to the workers, who will have to strive increasingly harder to achieve the progressively higher targets that will be set each year. Setting the incentives program off to a good start should take precedence over the need to raise more revenues quickly to narrow the deficit, pay off some of the government's debts and get the seal of good housekeeping from international credit rating agencies.



Diaspora as economic clout

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

AT THE GLOBAL Networking Pinoy convention in Cebu, you could slice the palpable altruism. How could "Global Pinoys" help a country skirting democratic debility? asked the delegates, a thousand or more Filipinos, of the diaspora. That was a take on John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural theme: "Ask not what your country can do for you...".

Over at the Cultural Center's Karangalan conference, the same value resounded. Delegates sought to mobilize "excellence to create a visionary Philippines," organizer Nicolas Perlas explained. "Without vision, the people perish," Isaiah wrote.

Will that goodwill create a critical mass enough to shatter crony governance that has brought this country to the brink of "democrataic exhaustion"?

Retire—and invest—here, President Macapagal-Arroyo suggested at the Cebu forum organized by heiress Loida Nicolas-Lewis and the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations. Filipinos are, in fact, already the world's third largest remitter of hard currency, after Indians and Mexicans.

Use your economic clout to sledge hammer acceptance of reforms at home, First Pacific's Manuel Pangilinan suggested. Dismantle today's systems where personal relationships measure worth. Replace that with a meritocracy, where excellence is rewarded. Otherwise, the best and the brightest Filipinos will continue to pull up stakes at the first visa.

By happenstance, both conventions got underway just when former National Security Adviser Jose Almonte presented before the Foundation for Economic Freedom a provocative asking what most delegates had in mind: "Can We Deal With Our Problems Democratically?"

The Potato Famine of the mid-1840s drove one out of every four persons in Ireland to migrate, Almonte recalled. Here, embedded, self-reinforcing, crony governance crafts policies to further feather nests. In the process, they shove educated, innovative Filipinos abroad.

Ironically, they're welcomed by advanced countries needing talent. Thus, at last count, we have dislodged Mexico as the world's largest supplier of labor, the Asian Development Bank reveals.

The Philippines' strength is in it's people, the paper asserts. They're talented, inventive, educated and flexible—qualities many Global Networking and Karangalan delegates personified. In other countries, Filipinos flourish. But at home, they're stymied by governance of elites, by elites, for elites.

In oligarchic Philippines, "the top 10 talk to each other and politics and business are cross-hatched," Kate Askew of Sydney Morning Herald writes on a "Global Filipino," businessman Eduardo Cojuangco .

"In Australia, Cojuangco leads the life of a landed gentleman and racehorse breeder," the Herald notes in it's extended article, "The Two Lives of the Boss." But life is "not necessarily as simple on his home soil" for this tycoon.

During this thrice-a-year visit, Cojuangco parks his private Hawker Siddeley HS 125 jet in the New South Wales town of Mudgee (population: 8,500). His $3-million Spanish-style "hacienda" houses yearlings and sprawls at Gooree Park.

This "arguably richest man in the Philippines" avoids publicity. "But a window into Cojuangco's private existence opened on Dec. 30, when the one-time Philippine presidential candidate and crony of the late Ferdinand Marcos waved $1.78 billion under the nose of the board of the big Australian dairy company, National Foods," the Herald said.

Australian business circles concede "National Foods is as good as in the hands of the Philippine brewer." Cojuangco's offer is equivalent to 12.4 times historic earnings before taxes. It thrashed the only rival, Kiwi dairy company Fonterra. Today, Cojuangco is well on the way to becoming a major player in Down Under's dairy industry.

At home, Cojuangco's problem pivots around the Presidential Commission on Good Government's fight to return what it alleges are funds stolen from coconut growers, the Herald notes.

Corruption buster, Haydee Yorac relentlessly leads the drive. "From all appearances it appears that (Cojuangco) is managing SMC well," Yorac says. She emphasizes "appearances." When asked if Cojuangco has been good for the Philippines, all Yorac says is: "It was bad for the coconut farmers."

Supreme Court decisions will define part of that future, the Herald says. In fact, both the anti-graft court and the Supreme Court have already ruled that coconut levies are pubic funds.

"Asian business media regularly compares Cojuangco with Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra or Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi: tough operators who've successfully made the transition to politics with qualities which, some argue, serve their countries well."

Will that track record square with Karangalan and Global Networking initiatives? With damaged institutions, the current governance cannot deliver, the Foundation of Economic Freedom's paper notes. "Let the market redeem our governance."

Is economic muscle-flexing by diaspora citizens the only recourse left to reduce crushing disparities? Are the Cojuangcos, Thaksins, Berlusconis the alternative remaining for countries that are increasingly crowded and whose people are impoverished, ill-fed and, as Indonesian scholar Soedjatmoko said, "badly in need of understanding themselves"?

* * *

E-mail : juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Unthinking

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I thought I had seen rock bottom in this government's propensity to show dimwittedness, but it keeps adding new depths to it everyday. The latest, and by far the most horrendous, display of it is its plan to apply VAT on books. Or more specifically, to scrap the exemption currently enjoyed by books from VAT. You can't get more dimwitted than that.

Uniting to oppose the plan, the various organizations involved in book development and selling point out its faults. At the very least, they say, it is anti-education.

Government says having books covered by VAT will help it raise another P272 million, which should mean better support for education. Wrong, says the group. What the VAT on books will do is jack up the cost of education, which is costly enough as it is, by jacking up the prices of textbooks and books that fall under "required reading." It will drive many lower middle-class parents to pull their kids out of private schools and put them in public ones. That will limit access to quality education, currently being provided by private schools, to the elite or at best to middle-class families who are determined to make heroic sacrifices. In turn, it will add to the burdens of a public school system already groaning from lack of classrooms, textbooks and teachers.

Whatever revenue you generate from taxing books (and it's arguable if any of that will find its way to education) will be swept away like a village to the sea by a tsunami.

The plan moreover is plain anti-learning. The idea for exempting books from taxes comes from common sense in general and from the Florence Agreement of 1950 to which we are signatory. The agreement asserts the vital importance of the free flow of ideas, which is the sine qua non for learning, and calls for all possible support to be given to materials that promote learning. It even bids members to dismantle customs barriers (tax, currency, and trade) on imported books and audiovisual material. Such is the premium it puts on them.

As it is, the group says, the Philippines already lags behind other countries in the production of books. We only turn out 5,000 titles a year, compared to the US and Japan, which turn out 50,000 to 80,000 titles per year. A close neighbor, Malaysia, produces 14,000 titles a year. The reason for our meager output is not lack of talent or creativity—though the steep decline in educational standards over the last few decades is taking its toll there, too—it is the lack of an institutional framework to support book publishing. The high cost of paper, in great part because it is heavily taxed, shows so. India is the biggest exporter of books—and probably the most literate country—in Asia because book publishing has that kind of support.

And, finally, the group points out that the solution lies not in taxing everything in sight but in merely improving tax collection. The National Tax Research Center estimates that the loss to government from 1998 to 2002 from uncollected taxes and VAT was P127 billion a year. You just reclaim a fraction of that and you won't need to tax life's true treasures and pleasures, chief of them books.

I can only add to the tone of these arguments, by raising them a notch or two higher. At the very least, why should anyone in her right mind imagine that any tax to come from books will accrue to education? The dubious distinction of this country making it to the record books in corruption must show that taxes do not accrue to national priorities, they accrue to individual personalities. The national priority is not public education, it is private expropriation. The main beneficiary of taxes is not Juan de la Cruz, it is Jose Pidal. This is more than robbing the poor to give to the rich, this is robbing souls to give to the devil.

I recall that some years ago Asiaweek published the rankings of universities in Asia, and three Philippine universities, which used to be among the top 10 or 20—UP, Ateneo and La Salle—had slipped to the 60s and 70s. Probably more now than then—this was many ago. One of the reasons for that was the low number of treatises and papers published by those universities in book form. That had greatly hurt the image of local universities, the reputation of scholars or academics being built on the question, "What books have you written?"

This country is illiterate enough as it is, as this newspaper should know, having campaigned vigorously, if often frustratingly, for spreading the habit of reading to Filipinos. Doubtless out of self-interest—no readers, no newspapers; but also out of a desire to get this country going—no books, no progress. Books remain humanity's greatest ally to enlightenment. With cable TV and video games dumbing the country's youth, you'd think government would give every incentive to books and reading. Such as build huge libraries everywhere or even giving books away. Not making books unreachable.

As it is, even government's plan to increase the "sin" taxes, or the taxes on cigarettes and liquor, is unconscionable. Why make the poor, who are the biggest consumers of cigarettes and liquor, pay more just because government can't collect from the rich? That is idiotic, and mean. Quite apart from that, the basic principle of taxation, as Benjamin Franklin et al, inscribed on tablet in their first act of defiance against British rule, is: No taxation without representation. The fact that the GMA government borrowed more than the two previous governments, to be paid for by the next generations of Filipinos, and has only widespread hunger and deprivation to show for it must show there is no representation whatsoever in this country.

Tax books? GMA should be happy no one has yet called for a tax boycott.

Understanding tragedy

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

Since the killer tsunamis that killed more than 200,000 people, many have queried: Why did God allow that catastrophe to happen? Among those who have sought to answer this question was Fr. Johnny C. Go, S.J., director of Xavier School in Greenhills, San Juan. A friend of mine, Marites Daza-Ingles, whose apostolate involves working with the Jesuit Communications Foundation in Payatas, sent me a copy of his homily, which was delivered on Jan. 9, the feast of the Lord's Baptism. I took the liberty of editing Fr. Go's homily and reprint it as a way of helping us all to understand the meaning of that tragedy. Here it is:

"The question we can't help ask is: Why should such a tragedy happen? Why should there be so much death and suffering? It's an important question because how can we, you and I, believe in a God who is all-good and all-powerful in the face of such suffering. Atheists will be quick to tell us: 'Look, if God is, as you claim, all-good, He must be powerless because, even if He wanted to, He couldn't stop such a catastrophe. Or if He is all-powerful, He can't be all that good because He wants to cause so much suffering? So, either God is all-good or He is all-powerful—or, maybe, He does not exist at all!'

"All the great religions are an attempt to answer the question of evil and suffering. So let us turn to our Christian faith and ask what it can say to us at this moment. Many, many things can be said, but I will just say three things.

"First, we can't say that it's God's will that this catastrophe should happen…Last week I got an e-mail from someone who asked, 'What could be God's point in all this?' But to ask the question that way is to assume that the calamity is God's will, literally 'an act of God.' But is it? To regard all this evil and suffering as God's will goes against the very heart of our faith, the very core of Our Lord's revelation to us. It makes no sense, and it violates what we believe in and, I think, what we, in our heart of hearts, already know.

"Secondly, our faith tells us that God is really all-powerful and has the power to stop and prevent such things from happening. However, for reasons we will never completely understand, God allows bad things to happen not just to bad people, but also to good people. First of all, He allows people to cause sufferings on others. One of the most terrible examples of this in recent times would have to be 9/11.

"But also, as we saw in this recent calamity, God also allows things to go wrong in this world of ours. He could have commanded those tsunamis to turn back, but He didn't; He allowed them to wreak havoc in such magnitude as the world has not seen in recent times. But just because God allows it doesn't mean He wants it or wills it or causes it. He allows people and nature to cause suffering.

"But don't we all wish it were not so? Wouldn't the world be a better place if people didn't hurt others, and if nature never went berserk? But then, that would be a world without human freedom or without the laws of nature. Why doesn't God design a world like that?

"If he is all-good, then He must want what's best for us. If He is all-powerful, then He must be able to create what's best for us. But we also have to add that God is also all-wise—He also knows what's best for us. It seems that God thinks human freedom and the laws of nature are important for us.

"God must have a very good reason for insisting on respecting human freedom and the laws of nature—a reason that does not render all the suffering caused by sin and natural calamities meaningless. We, with our limited reason, can only guess what that reason is, but many theologians suspect it has something to do with love. After all, without human freedom, how can we even begin to love, when love entails choices and commitments? In a universe without natural laws, where actions do not lead to natural consequences, how can we learn to use our freedom responsibly and lovingly?

"It's not a completely satisfying answer, but when we talk about the mystery of suffering, it's never a matter of reason, because there will never be reason enough. Rather, it's a matter of faith. At the end of the day, all of us who see all this suffering are being invited to make a choice: Will I still choose to believe in a God who is all-good, all-powerful and all-wise?

"Having said all that, I'd like to go back to Our Lord's baptism—and this is the third thing I'd like to say about evil and suffering. The river that Our Lord insisted on being immersed in is really more than just the River Jordan. It's the river of our tears, we, human beings, who have to bear suffering because of nature or people gone wrong, even of ourselves gone wrong. It is the river of our fears and troubles, we who find ourselves swimming in these often-turbulent waters, frantically trying to keep afloat as we live our lives, learning to love.

"He wasn't simply insisting on going through some nice river ritual. Through His baptism, He is telling us that this God, who designed this world where nature sometimes goes wrong and people too often go wrong, is not a God who keeps His distance, conveniently far and safe from the chaos of the world. Rather, He is a God who is willing 'to get His feet wet,' a God who has actually immersed Himself in the river of our tears and fears. In fact, he is a God who has even allowed Himself to be drowned in our death, so that you and I might have life.

"Our Lord is telling us that in the midst of our suffering, no matter how terrible, whatever the reason, He is a God who is with us and near to us. The countless people injured, widowed and orphaned by this tragic calamity—we can be sure the Lord is there with them, sharing in their pain, supporting them and giving them the strength and courage they need…"

Cagayan's famous bats

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

AFTER almost an hour of waiting, it happened. The fruit bats, called "*kalambag*" by the locals, whooshed out of their cave high on the cliffs. Though I had kept my eyes peeled on the darkening sky, the bats fled their shelter so silently I could have missed the event were it not for the whispered alert of my companions.

The famous "*mororan*" had begun. As the bats grew in number, we heard a faint rustle, a muted roar that gave the name to the event. After a few seconds, as the stream of bats thickened, we sniffed the distinct sharp odor of ammonia—from the guano that filled the walls and floor of their cave, we surmised.

Like a dark stream of water, thousands of bats formed a sinuous arc over the river and trees. They circled over our parked banca once, twice. As we made our way downriver, some of them followed us, small dark clouds that moved with the wind, joining and parting in a jagged rhythm.

When our flat-floored boat finally moored and we, visitors, alighted, exclaiming with delight at the "rare" sight, Ferdinand Cortez, one of our hosts, assured us that "tomorrow, at the same time, the bats will leave their cave again, as they do every evening." Well, the bats may keep such a tight daily schedule that residents can set their watches by them, but city goers will still find their nightly flight quite a novelty, if not a truly awe-inspiring sight.

The *mororan* takes place near one of Cagayan's foremost tourist attractions, the Callao Cave. So day visitors are well-advised to time their visit in the afternoon, take in the usual banca-ride down the Cagayan River then park below the look-out until dusk, when the *kalambag* set out on their nightly hunt for food. I assure you, it will cap your day of sightseeing with a memory worth writing home (or a column) about.

* * *

THAT morning, we had been fetched from Tuguegarao's Hotel Roma—one of the city's more decent and modern hotels—on a tour of Cagayan's nearby attractions.

Our tour began with the Shrine of Our Lady of Piat, an image of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary that has a reputation for granting earnest prayers.

Our Lady of Piat, whose feast is observed every July 2, is supposed to have been brought over from Macao in 1604 by the Dominican friars. First venerated in the town of Lallo, the image was brought to Piat when the friars opened their missions in eastern Cagayan, then populated by a fierce tribe called the Itawes.

Through the ages, stories of Our Lady's beneficence abounded: how she saved entire towns from floods (when the nearby Chico River overflowed) and drought, and how a devotee's prayer in the midst of heavy rains and high waves saved a boatful of passengers from drowning off the coast of Aparri.

Over time, Our Lady of Piat came to be recognized as the patroness not just of Cagayan and the provinces of Cagayan Valley, but also of the entire Northern Luzon. The Shrine was remodeled sometime in the 1990s and so lacks the charm of older churches. But the devotion of the populace is palpable.

* * *

AFTER a stop at a native restaurant in Tuguegarao for lunch, we then motored to the town of Iguig, for a glimpse of "Calvary Hills," bigger-than-life-size concrete tableaus of the Stations of the Cross, dotted across the rolling landscape behind the parish church.

The parish of Iguig was founded in 1607 by the friar Ambrosio dela Madre de Dios, but the brick-and-mortar church was built more than a hundred years later. The only remnants of the ancient structure is an obelisk atop a ragged pyramid of bricks that marks the church's construction in 1765, and some crumbling walls and sagging buttresses at the back.

Iguig's most famous attraction, though wasn't built until the early 1970s by a parish priest who was undoubtedly inspired by the rolling landscape in the church's backyard, and who doubtless thought of the tourism potential of the magnificent view of verdant hillsides and the sparkling river below. But the setting is marred by graffiti on the images and garbage blown in by the wind and left by sightseers. Those curious about Calvary Hills may want to know it was used as a setting for Johnny Delgado's parish in the movie "Santa Santita."

* * *

FROM Iguig we drove for over an hour to the town of Penablanca to visit Callao Cave, which I remembered from a scene in one of Armida Siguion Reyna's movies, and thence to watch the bat-show.

There is a simple chapel in the first chamber of the cave—in the movie scene (a ritual by a religious cult), it was lit by hundreds of candles, lending the setting an eerie charm. The candles were nowhere in sight when we finally reached the cave after a hard climb up the hillside, but there was enough light from a natural skylight to appreciate the cave's scenery, which at some points reminded me of scenes from "Lord of the Rings."

I'm sure there are more sights in Cagayan than there was room for in a single day, so I look forward to another visit.

The reason I was in the province, by the way, was to speak before the Region II Regional Higher Education Press Conference, hosted this year by the University of St. Louis, Tuguegarao. By some stroke of luck, I found that another speaker was our INQUIRER cartoonist Jess Abrera; no one can ask for a more entertaining traveling companion.

Many thanks to the administration of USL: Fr. Fernold Denna, CISM; Emmanuel James Pattaguan, Marilyn Cruz, and Ferdinand Cortez, adviser of "The Louisian Courier," the student publication.

Our gratitude, too, to the staff of "The Courier" and our tour companions: editors Augustus Lito Narag and Aleth Therese Dimalanta, and Glenda Jaygee Calagui, Marivic de Laza, Robshaun Cagurangan and Martin, our intrepid van driver.

Them were the days

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

AT SOME point in our glorious history, according to some woman by the name of Florence Horn ("Orphans of the Pacific," 1941), we were actually awash in money. Well, the government was (I don't know about the people). But read on even it it's bad for your blood pressure and even worse for your digestion.

It seems that way back when (certainly before we were bombed nearly out of existence), we were called the "Pearl of the Orient," a title that Singapore or maybe Thailand is vying for now (and well they should; I doubt if even the most brazen and callous of our politicians would have the gall to protest). The reason for the claim (and it appears that the Filipino was duly proud of his city) was that the metropolis displayed white government buildings and hotels. Malacañang was "lovely" (when did you ever hear it described thus?), Manila's location on a crescent bay with its stupendous sunsets was unobscured by rinky-dink structures and "in comparison with Shanghai and Hong Kong, its cleanliness." (Excuse me, she may as well have been writing about another country.)

The reference to wealth was due to the establishment of Quezon City when apparently the Univesity of the Philippines' new campus was were constructed at a cost of P8 million undevalued pesos. There also other new structures in Manila and a wide new cement road to Tagaytay. And listen, the Jai-Alai Palace was "reputedly the world's finest," doing a roaring business. You are informed that it was built with a government loan from the new Agricultural and Industrial Bank which does seem to be a strange investment for that kind of a bank but no stranger than veterans' funds being used to build golf clubs.

All over the islands, public works were going up and cooperatives were being established. Money had been set aside to buy the Buenavista Estate owned by the San Juan de Dios Hospital. Another character, Gen. Paulino Santos, was moving his "colonists" to Mindanao, a statement that provoked me into wondering if that was the way they intended to get the Muslims into the Republic. Prior to this, the Muslims must have outnumbered the Christians, but after the Christians bred like rabbits, the poor original inhabitants are now outnumbered and no referendum in their favor will ever pass. I have to tell you that every document or report I've come across declares that the Muslims never wanted anything to do with us. They didn't mind if the Americans would continue to administer the islands, but they didn't want to belong to a republic run by Filipinos. As you can see the problem continues.

The Treasury at the time had loads of money and the Quezon administration could afford to splurge on all kinds of public works. The reason for this was the 3-cent tax on coconut oil that the U S Treasury collected, amounting to some $14 to $17 million a year. But listen, at the end of the day the money was returned to us! I think that's pretty good. (Maybe Westinghouse should also return what we've paid them although I doubt if it'd go into public works.) The national budget then was between $40 to $50 million, but the money didn't become part of the income of government. It went instead to a separate fund controlled by the president.

Horn appeared to believe that the funds gave Filipinos "a false sense of national prosperity," based on the premise that it would have been beneficial for us to have lived within our budget. (I don't know anyone who does that. Do you?) It would have prepared us for the reality of independence, but on the other hand nothing could have prepared the Filipino for the reality of 1946.

The money wasn't even used to pay off public debts but at the same time MacArthur and Quezon admitted that defense expenditures had been "curtailed" on the grounds that (1) the islands were indefensible and (2) the government couldn't afford it. Some people raised their eyebrows at that (this is a perpetual reaction around here whenever government makes excuses about being broke, etc). On the other hand, government spent $5.5 million constructing the Legislative building but couldn't afford to give MacArthur an annual $8 million for defense.

Horn thought that Quezon was merely acting like your ordinary everyday, garden-variety politician who prefers to spend on projects to impress the electorate (note how overpasses and underpasses suddenly start sprouting before an election) rather than building an army or paying off the public debt. Perhaps he figured it was America's job to defend the islands before 1946 anyway.

It also turns out that the government even then was in the habit of competing with the private sector by buying businesses. It bought the railroad from its British owners and founded the Philippine National Bank. It set up a cement and coal company and ran the "handsome Manila Hotel, which serves good food, has air-conditioned rooms, and is socially correct (and the most expensive place) for an opulent traveler, white or Oriental to stay." Manuel L. Quezon must be turning in his grave.

Government ran companies rather successfully, like Cebu Portland Cement which was turning a tidy profit. The Philippine National Railways could compete with other Asian railroads. The government set up the first canning business over objections that the industries were subsidized and they were "enterprises best left to private initiative." Horn thought it all depended on whether "politicians can resist loading up their industries with incompetent jobholders." Given our experience, no further comment is necessary.

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

Just the way I want it

YOUNG BLOOD

Rochelle Gampon

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

AFTER HOPPING from one job to another, I always find myself wondering if this is new job is really the one I want. Fresh from college and after delivering that short graduation speech heard by a couple hundreds of fellow graduates and my very proud mommy and daddy, I plunged into job websites and newspaper classified ads job-hunting. Very much driven, I walked through the streets of Makati to nowhere, handing out my resumes to advertising, TV and radio companies. And not just any company, but the biggest in the industry, thinking that I would be able to get in without too many problems.

Too late did I realize that graduating with honors does not make me the blessed one, someone who would be welcomed with open arms. I am simply a nobody. I am just one among millions of fresh graduates who are looking for a decent job that can somehow be related to the degrees we earned in college.

After a few months of buying Sunday newspapers, frequent trips to an Internet café and just walking into the human resources departments of various firms, I became very much frustrated with my life and felt a bit more insecure every time I heard that a classmate had landed a job.

To keep myself busy, I grabbed the first job opportunity offered by a retail store in Cavite. I was hired as the store's marketing assistant for the Cavite area. I was doing promotional activities, advertising collaterals and administrative work for the marketing head.

While there I told myself that that I am indeed prepared to live in the real world. Although I had a bruised ego, I worked hard and enjoyed my trips to the different Cavite branches of the store. Sometimes I did promo that required me to stay inside a booth and spin wheels to find out the gift items I would give away.

I encountered students who would play around the booth that make degrading remarks about how lowly a promo girl's job must be. Little did they know that I graduated with honors from the very same school they were enrolled in.

But their words seemed to have an instant replay button inside my head. I was hurt a couple of times, until I realized that they didn't know what they are talking about and that they haven't had a taste yet of the real world.

To rub salt into an open wound, my former professors couldn't hide their disappointment when they learned that I was working there despite the qualifications that I had. They didn't know that I just wanted to begin living my life as I wanted to, without anyone telling me what I should do. I saw no need to try to live up to their expectations. I needed to prove to myself that I could deal with my own monsters, especially my fear that I would never be able to make it.

After a few months, my prayers were answered and I was employed by one of the country's largest television companies. I was hired as a researcher. I did phone interviews and did background researches for the writers.

But after working for a month, I walked out. It was a dream job for most, especially for those who were just starting in the media industry like me. But maybe I had too much pride, so I couldn't swallow the daily scolding and the pressure. It was not that the job wasn't meant for me, I just wasn't ripe for it.

I have been asked several times why I gave up the job, and I still grope for an answer. I left while some people were laughing boisterously and cursing endlessly a group of young starters like me. The experience still haunts me but the memory no longer hurts.

Then I was employed as an advertising and promotions specialist by a healthcare company. Most of what I know now I learned from my mentors there: hard work, patience, honesty, integrity, professionalism. I had my share of frustrations and failures but that did not stop me from dreaming and striving to fulfill those dreams. I met different kinds of people—mostly flawed and a few almost perfect, some real and others superficial. I worked with professionals, learned the tricks of the trade as well as how to protect myself from the vultures of the industry. I made a few friends and earned a lot of valuable experience.

Now my philosophy has changed dramatically. I am no longer driven solely by idealism. I have accepted realities and made changes in my attitude towards work and life. But I have maintained pride in work and retained my integrity.

In my little speech in 2002, I asked my fellow graduates to create their own reality. I followed my own advice and made my own reality. I may still struggle along the way but I am proud to say that I make my choices and stand by those choices.

Yes, I do live in a clammy boarding house and don't have material things to flaunt. But I am made up of more than that, and so are you.

So take risks. Make choices. You only live once. Enjoy life.

We can create our own reality. Let us not be paralyzed by fear of failure and misplaced idealism. Let us do our best in everything we do. And let us never lose hope.

I have a job. And I have never enjoyed working as much as I do now. I may have doubts sometimes, but it's part of life.

Restless. Confused. Idealistic. Impatient. Whatever. That's what I am and that's just what I want to be.

Rochelle Gampon, 23, is an AB communication graduate of De La Salle University Dasmariñas and works as a fine and performing arts assistant in a school in Metro Manila.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

THEY SAID

What matters

"We do not decide when we go, the circumstances of our death are immaterial. It is how we spent our years that matter."
—*Fr. Antonio Rosales*

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Undeserved profits from LPG residuals

IN MY letter "Amend oil deregulation law" (PDI, 09/04/04), I cited two reasons why I think the oil deregulation law should be amended.

There is a third reason, but I did not include this because I was waiting for important information from the Department of Energy. This concerns the pricing of LPG in cylinders. At present, consumers are billed based on a net weight of either 11 kilograms or 50 kilograms.

On July 14, 2004, when petroleum and LPG prices were on the upswing, I wrote the Office of the President, through the executive secretary, to suggest that the government look into the matter of residuals in supposedly empty cylinders. These residuals have already been paid for by the consumers; technically or in effect, they constitute an overcharge while giving oil companies and LPG refillers unwarranted profits. I also suggested that to verify my claim the government should do a random weighing of empty cylinders.

My letter was endorsed by the executive secretary to the DOE. In its Oct. 27, 2004 reply, signed by Ms Zenaida Monsada, director of the Oil Industry Management Bureau, (I received the letter on the first week of December 2004), the DOE stated:

1. "They (LPG companies) theorized that while some LPG vapor will remain in the cylinders after all LPG liquid has been exhausted, it will only be about 44 grams or 0.4% or less than half of a percent of the total net content of an 11kg cylinder, which LPG companies cannot reasonably profit from."

2. "Likewise, the Department conducted an initial and random inspection/weighing of empty LPG cylinders. Of the 45 cylinders weighed, 22 had exact tare weight, 17 had a range of +0.5kg to +0.1kg weight differences from the tare weight and the remaining cylinders had negative variances ranging from -0.6kg to -0.1kg."

The DOE findings confirm the presence of residuals. Granting, without accepting, that an empty cylinder keeps only 44 grams of residual, this quantity is not insignificant given that there are 8 million to 10 million cylinders in circulation all over the country. This means that 352,000 to 440,000 kilograms of paid residuals, worth P12.3 to P15.4 million (at P35/kg), are circulating in the system. If we assume an average cycle time of three months (the time it takes a cylinder to get back to the consumer)—or four cycles a year—this would mean an extra and undeserved profit of P50 million to P62 million annually for the oil companies. By any standard, this is not an insignificant amount. And this will get bigger as LPG prices rise or as LPG consumption grows and the number of cylinders in circulation increases.

Congress should overhaul and amend the oil deregulation law and consider a downward adjustment in the present basis of billing for 11kg or 50kg of LPG.

It is also suggested that, to protect the interest of the consumers, the DOE go into a comprehensive assessment of the extent oil companies profit from LPG residuals.

—ERNIE ADAYA
Felix Avenue, Cainta, Rizal

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Fernando lauded for 'wet-flag'

I AM amused at the reaction of some Metro Manila mayors to Bayani Fernando's latest move to "wet" people who wait for their ride in the middle of the street.

I challenge the likes of Makati's Jejomar Binay to accomplish half of what Fernando accomplished as mayor of Marikina. The MMDA chief should be commended not criticized. His record for making people obey laws is unmatched by any other mayor in this country.

I live near Pasong Tamo Extension in Makati, where there is practically no sidewalk to speak of because an entire two-kilometer stretch where the sidewalk is supposed to be is occupied by approximately 40 Binay sponsored *sari-sari* stores. People, therefore, have no choice but to walk on the street and brave getting hit by vehicles. Binay concerns himself with ensuring his votes from his "base" and ignores basic rules. He gives free movie tickets to senior citizens to smell good. Fernando will have none of that.

My advice to all you mayors: Be like Fernando.

—ANTHONY V. MALIXI
1976 Kasoy St., Makati

MMDA chair Bayani Fernando: unmatched record PDI PHOTO

More dreadful than diseases, calamities

THIS IS in reaction to media reports regarding the "rapid spread" of meningococcemia throughout Baguio, when in fact there hasn't been an incident where a cluster of victims have been diagnosed with the disease.

It seems that the reports have blown the situation here out of proportion. Most of the supposed meningococcemia cases haven't been thoroughly investigated, and most medical experts came to their conclusion (on meningococcemia's presence in certain individuals) based on symptoms that also appear in other less severe illnesses.

I would also like to comment on the reckless presumption of the Department of Health. Although it may seem to be doing its job by warning people not to travel to Baguio, it is in effect jeopardizing business in the locality. In the past few weeks several small-scale, local establishments, especially those into tourism, activities, have suffered substantial losses. Some saw their income drop to only a third of their usual sales during holidays.

What people don't see is how the widespread rumor about this disease is being used to promote selfish political agenda by misleading Baguio residents into blaming their current officials for lack of action.

I'm just a simple citizen but I will not stand by and watch my city die because the false information being spread around. No disease or calamity—no matter how grave—can compare with the damage brought about by human ignorance.

—JASON XAVIER ESCUDERO
jx_escudero@yahoo.com

Expensive medicines also a pressing issue

DAY by day, we hear people complain against the high cost of gasoline and other basic commodities.

We always complain about anything in our country, from poor health services to the high cost of electricity, from the daily traffic mess to the increasing crime rate.

Well, that's fine with me, except that nobody seems to care, much less complain, about the high cost of medicines.

If I'm not mistaken, the cost of drugs in our country is probably the highest in Asia, and yet nobody is taking up the cudgels for our impoverished countrymen. And worse, our concerned government officials, specifically at the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Health, are just as indifferent as our lawmakers and local chief executives.

Whatever happened to the consumer protection movement in this country? I don't hear about it either.

Who's really to blame? Shall we just sit down and remain silent while the drug manufacturers are making a killing in the prices of their medicines?

If the DTI and DOH are helpless about the situation, where can we find relief?

|I hope Sec. Cesar Purisima of DTI and Sec. Manuel Dayrit of DOH can give us the answers.

Let's do something about the high cost of medicines now, before we all perish slowly and silently simply because we can't afford to buy the medicines we need to save our own lives.

—MANUEL O. LIMSEC
Bagong Ilog, Pasig City

Edsa's broken dreams

FOUR years after Edsa II, the Filipino people's expectations for good governance, economic relief for the poor, justice in the Estrada plunder case and other corruption cases have turned into frustrations.

Four years after Edsa II, the poor have become poorer and are likely to get poorer still. Even as existing taxes and high prices of basic commodities and services are further overburdening the already suffering Filipino people, a higher VAT rate and heavier taxes are in the works.

The people are heavily burdened while the Arroyo government's so-called belt-tightening measures and solutions to the fiscal crisis—such as wage freeze and additional tax burdens amidst continuing price increases—constitute further injustice against the poor. We are greatly dismayed and outraged that the poor, as in the case of Hacienda Luisita workers, can barely survive with slave wages while the Cojuangcos and their ilk get richer at the expense and misery of the poor.

As Social Weather Stations clarified, there may be fewer hungry Filipino families these days, as its latest survey showed, but this is result of further belt-tightening (more sacrifices) of the poor, not of the Arroyo administration's efforts.

Four years after Edsa II, President Macapagal-Arroyo's promises—poverty alleviation, jobs creation, lower prices and other benefits from the government's privatization, deregulation, liberalization and other globalization-inspired policies—continue to be a tsunami of lies.

We renew our commitment to support the urgent demands of workers and peasants for just wages, genuine land reform and fundamental social change, in pursuit of the Church's mission—as concretized by the "Social Teachings of the Church"—to be a prophetic people committed to Christ's mission of proclaiming liberty to the poor and oppressed.

—REV. FR. ALLAN JOSE ARCEBUCHE, OFM
national co-chairperson,
Promotion of Church People's Response, 3/F NCCP Bldg.
879 Edsa, Quezon City

Why is SSS silent on burial benefits?

LAST SEPT. 17, 2004, I filed a funeral claim with the Social Security System, Bago City, as mother and primary beneficiary of my son, Alex V. Abian, (SSS No. 03-6714337-0), who died on Oct. 11, 1985.

After a month, I made a follow-up with SSS, Bago City and I was told that my claim was referred to SSS, Quezon City, which will be the one to pay my claim. On Oct. 14, I sent a registered letter to SSS, Quezon City inquiring on the status of my claim. To date, I have not received any answer.

I cannot understand SSS' silence. If I am not entitled to the funeral benefit, I request to be informed as soon as possible so that I can file the death claim. No matter how small the burial benefit, it would definitely ease the economic difficulty of an indigent mother, even for just a time.

—LYDIA V. ABIAN,
Purok Daisy,
Barangay Calumangan,
Bago City, Negros Occidental

Plunging ratings, rising hopes whipping up gov't into shape

MANY are baffled over the news report that while Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's performance rating is plunging, more people are optimistic about their lot in 2005. There is a simple explanation to this seeming paradox. The optimism may have stemmed from the prospect of GMA being ousted before year-end.

That the Arroyo administration is clearly in panic can be seen in the knee-jerk reactions to the unfortunate events that have visited us in the last two months. GMA's visit to the devastated areas to be photographed with the victims was simply pathetic. She was even reported insistent on going to Quezon province at the height of a typhoon in the area. If GMA was gripped by suicidal tendencies at the time, it was sheer madness to put in jeopardy her security people, let alone the helicopters (of which we have a scant few).

During the wake and burial rites of Fernando Poe Jr., GMA's staff went into high gear in search of ways to mollify the Poe fanatics (national artist award, national colors at half-mast, and burial at the Libingan Ng Mga Bayani).

GMA's lawyers would be ecstatic if the Supreme Court ruled that his protest can no longer proceed. However, GMA's job would become most difficult if she passes the opportunity to validate her victory. Beyond GMA, the integrity of our electoral process as the foundation of a working democracy is paramount. If there were irregularities in the last elections so massive as to thwart the people's will, it is GMA's primary duty to uncover this and punish the culprits even at the expense of her having to leave office. Failing at this, she will be leaving a scornful legacy, the stigma of which cannot be obliterated by the the privilege of having been president.

This is not to say that the opposition's ascension to power following a GMA ouster is necessarily a prescription for the alleviation of the nation's plight. For sixty years we have watched the country sink to economic morass and moral decadence as opposing political factions alternated at the helm. The nation's hope for redemption is in the nonpartisan sector of society outside of the bureaucracy. The politically unaligned influential groups, the business sector, the religious groups, media and the academe can lead in demanding honest and efficient performance in the bureaucracy. They have acquitted themselves well in responding to the needs in the recent disasters; they could do the same in normal times by committing their resources towards overseeing the performance of public officials and prosecuting them when they err. The resources expended in this manner may well be rewarded by whipping into shape a government that can cope with emergencies without laying a burden on the private sector in calamities.

—E. P. DAKANAY, JR.
43 Baltazar St., Philamlife Village,
Pamplona, Las Piñas City

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Former President Joseph Estrada hit the Arroyo administration for alleged corruption. He then promised to lead RP to a 'new dawn.' Your reaction?

"LOOK WHO's TALKING!"
—alex, *puerto princesa*

tell dat 2 da marines!
—mabini dizon, *laguna*

hay naku, si erap talaga nananaginip ng gising!
—Wallyngail R. Yumul, *Isabela*

Go... go... go... ERAP
—Duv, *la union*

Dapat noon naging presidente siya ginawa na niya ang pagbabago, eh, inom at sugal ang inasikaso niya.
—fred almencion, *marikina*

Erap must have a clear direction & ideological position before doing it. he may be thinking of it bcoz he wants 2 unify d opposition
—evelyn kwong, *makati city*

Nagmama-linis inuunto nauuto, kaya't talsik puwesto, now paulit-uli. Sir maawa naman kayo sa mga kapus-palad, hwag nyo na silang gamitin.
—Jfernandez, *roxas city*

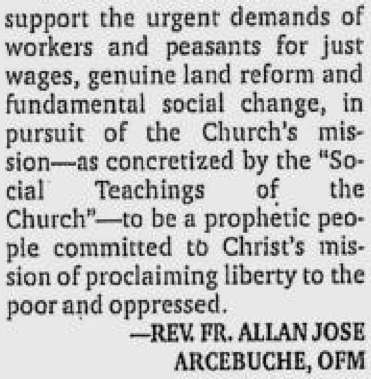
new dawn? Is that the title of his new movie?
—Gerard Gumban, *davao city*

Estrada n his cohorts in d opposition are a gang of thieves n discredited leaders so what new dawn is he talking about?
—Victor Emmanuel Lim, *Las Piñas City*

tapos na ang dawn, hintayin nalang natin ang night.
—Joel Quintela, *Tagum City*

frankly, i do not trust erap, or anyone leading the opposition to lead us to a new dawn.
—juanito raymundo, *naga city*

is he sincere or mere politicking. He shud clean himself first.
—aristeo salapa, *digos city*



Ambitious, hollow vow! Mere politicking. What he was n0t able 2 do while in office, he can never do as a civilian all the m0re.
—Kris E., *Baguio*

so what else is new? Too many advisers plus his own street-wise, tough-guy attitude would result in disaster and chaos.
—ariel buning, *meycauayan, bulacan*

Huhuummm... WALA na bang iba? Palagi na lang SILA... SILA... SILA... IDEADMA KO NA LANG!
—Edwin B. Trinidad, *Davao*

strait out of celluloid world... d greatest thief alive, ridding d gov't of corruption... it's d greatest make-believe comedy
—raul g sarmiento, *bicolor, pampanga*

he should clear his name 1st b4 he lead any movement against d administration
—rosemarie agtarap, *la union*

yehey! bravo... Truth will set us free
—cynthia a. Valdez, *la union*

maybe a new dawn 2 show dat he has not done enough & never done enough, so long as he has something more 2 contribute! maybe a new dawn of doing nothing 4 others is d undoing of ourselves! maybe a new dawn dat we r blind until we c dat nothing is worth in vain... building & leading a world of a corrupt system! maybe a new dawn of making us poorer & never enriches & costs nothing!
—elmer Guevara, *urdaneta city*

We now see GMA is worse dan ERAP.
—Ruth Mabagos, *MAKATI*

i think d former pres. estrada has caught a sickness of Alzheimer's disease dat he forgot he was thrown out as president b4 for being corrupt.
—walter agne, *marikina city*

pres. erap just trying 2 be like "superman"... or... like our native defender Lapu-Lapu
—may g. malapitan, *quezon city*

gmik lang yan, how can he lead 2 a new dawn, when he was a president, 8 was a midnite-day corruption andyan din.
—ralph larida deocos, *davao city*

UGH! 2 me, it sounds "new-juedeng"; Corruption in gov't is just a rehash even b4 him.
—Lauro Isorena, *Pasay City*

He should have done it when he was still in malacañang. If i remember it right. He was removed from the office...
—Ralph Bermido, *Olongapo city*

come again? tsk. tsk. ang magnanakaw nga naman...
galit talaga sa kapwa nya!
—marites s obaña, *polangui, albay*

how could he? This is absurd & ludicrous! He was already deposed.
—gerry singson, *vigan city*

maybe a new dawn of doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves... maybe a new dawn to show that he has not done enough never done, so long as he has something more to contribute.
—ronald ramos, *urdaneta city*

its good for a movie title.
—florencio condes, *pasay city*

Sino ba talaga ang corrupt, ANG NAPATALSIK O ANG NAKAUPO SA MALAKANYANG. Parang kayo na yata ang huling nakaka-alam?
—cris manas, *solano, nueva vizcaya*

What about his own corruptiOn? He had the chance to lead the natiOn & he was just as cOrrupt.
—Kris E., *Baguio*

former pres. estrada shud jus kip his mOuth shut bcoz d pipol wOnt believe his statements anymOre. he is not credible anymOre.
—camille flores, *quezon city*

joseph estrada is not the right person to lead RP, but he will be doing the righteous thing if he will help fight corruption.
—roger ramos, *san pablo*

He has no moral authority to lead the fight against corruption because he is also charged with corruption and plunder.
—MERCEDES OBEN, *alabang*

Erap can never be d solution. He doesn't have what it takes 2 lead d country 2 a new dawn. Another corrupt won't make a new dawn.
—Desiree Guevara, *Quezon City*

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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TRANSMISSION CHAIN CUT

Baguio meningo alert lifted

By Blanche Rivera
in Manila

BAGUIO City residents can heave a sigh of relief.

The Department of Health yesterday brought down the alert on meningococcemia in the city and cleared Baguio of any further transmission of the fatal respiratory ailment.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit pronounced Baguio free from meningococcemia 11 days after the last case, a 30-year-old woman, was admitted to the Baguio General Hospital for treatment.

"No transmission occurred from this case," Dayrit said, adding that this means the chain of transmission in Baguio City has been cut.

The Neisseria meningitides bacteria, which cause meningococcal diseases, have an incubation period of seven to ten days.

The DOH command center in Baguio has also found that majority of the cases of meningococcal diseases in Baguio City actually came from Mt. Province and other parts of Benguet.

Vice versa

"We are studying now whether the infection originated from Baguio and then spread outside, or if it was actually from outside and brought into Baguio City," Dayrit said in a press briefing at the DOH office in Manila yesterday.

He said, however, that it was likely that the infection originated from Baguio based on the rate of infection in the city.

There were eight deaths in Baguio City due to meningococcemia in December, compared with only two from Jan. 1 to 23. This reflects a reduced fatality rate of 20 percent from 50 percent last month, according to Dayrit.

The DOH is closely monitoring the traffic from Baguio City to other parts of the Cordillera Administrative Region to ensure that the Neisseria meningitides bacteria would not enter the city again.

"Even though the meningo alert has been lowered, surveillance of the cases will continue as sporadic cases can still occur," DOH command center spokesperson Luningning Villa said in a statement.

The DOH has recorded 17 suspected meningococcemia cases in Benguet, but only three have been confirmed so far. Mt. Province has 19 suspected meningococcemia cases with no confirmed case.

Baguio has taken steps to fight a scare over meningococcemia which has caused tourism revenue in the country's northern resort city to drop dramatically.

City officials and residents had complained of discrimination as a result of the meningococcemia scare following reports that students from Baguio were being screened if they visited other places.

Tourism trade heaves sigh of relief on alert lifting

BAGUIO CITY—The meningococcemia operations center lifted the meningococcemia alert in the city on Monday, giving the heavily-battered tourism industry here a sigh of relief after three months.

Dr. Luningning Villa, head of the emerging and reemerging diseases unit of the Department of Health and spokesperson of the operation center, said the alert was lifted after no case was reported after 10 days, the maximum incubation period of meningococcemia.

But health and tourism officials here said the DOH declaration should not allow residents to lower their guard.

Dr. Anna Marie Leung, executive director of Community Health Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera Region (Chestcore), said the meningococcemia scare described the country's poor health care system "as money and resources were spent on high-profile campaigns that did not target the root causes of the outbreak."

"This is similar to the National Immunization Day or Libreng Patak campaigns of the DOH which emphasize single-event immunizations rather than striving to provide enough budget to expand the immunization," Leung said in a statement.

Cheap rooms

Jeanine McCaan-Chan, president of the Baguio Association of Hotels and Inns (Bahai), said their members were forced to slash room rates by 50 percent between December 2004 and January when tourists started shying away from the city.

But Bahai will continue to offer room rate cuts from 30 percent to 60 percent until Feb. 14, the start of the Baguio Flower Festival or "Panagbenga" to "generate visitor momentum," she said.

Purificacion Molintas, regional director of the Department of Tourism, was ecstatic over the lifting. She said tourism-related activities in February have been finalized following the creation of an integrated tourism recovery program called "Bloom Baguio Bloom."

The program calls for the regular cleaning of the market, personal and city-wide hygiene and sanitation, she said.

"It has been back to normal for such a long time but I'm glad about the official announcement," she said. *Frank Cimatu, Desiree Caluza, Donna Demetillo and Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

SURRENDER RITES REUTERS
Men who claimed to be members of the communist New People's Army await rites marking their surrender as revolvers and rusting machine guns, their supposed weapons, are put on display in Agusan del Sur last Jan. 19.

Cop says list of illegal log cases erroneous

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The top police official here said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' list of top 10 illegal logging cases was erroneous.

Supt. Willie Dangane, city police chief, said late last year he had apprehended a truckload of illegally-cut lumber allegedly owned by Maj. Dencio Antonio, then commander of the Army's 7th Special Forces Battalion.

But the seized lumber was only about 3,000 board feet and worth less than P200,000, contrary to the DENR's estimate of P759,000.

"The DENR report was erroneous and exaggerated. It was grossly unfair on the part of Major Antonio to be included in the top 10 list of illegal loggers. I was the one who was able to apprehend the hot lumber and as far as I can remember the market cost was less than P200,000," Dangane said.

He said as provincial director of Sarangani, his men recorded at least seven major apprehensions of illegally-cut lumber.

Dangane said his office seized P120,000 worth of lumber from Jan.1 to Dec. 31, 2003.

Cases were filed against the suspected illegal loggers, including DENR personnel who were in cahoots with the illegal loggers.

"The DENR must cleanse first its own ranks so (the) government's campaign against illegal loggers will succeed," Dangane said. *Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Bishop to be ordained

EVANGELISTA

THE MOST Rev. Reynaldo Gonda Evangelista, DD, new bishop-elect of the Diocese of Boac, will be ordained on Jan. 26 at the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Sebastian in Lipa City. Bishop Evangelista belongs to the Archdiocese of Lipa (Batangas) and was the parish priest of Talisay, Batangas and rector of the St. Francis de Sales Major Seminary in Marawoy, Lipa City. Only 44 years old, he has been a priest for 18 years. Well-loved by his pastors, peers, parishioners, seminary students, family and friends, the new bishop is known for his simplicity, gentleness and humility. He believes that "these traits emanating from the heart are expressed in patient meditative reflection, respectful silence, an understanding smile, the careful choice of words and gestures to avoid hurting a person..."

3 Cafgus found dead

BALANGA CITY—Three militiamen were found dead in waters off Cavite, police said. Their two companions were reported missing. They were patrolling the area when armed men, believed to be illegal fishers, fired at them, police said. Killed were Charlito Alcantara, 38, Jomarie Jayawon, 37, and Guilbert Remorin, 31, all members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) in the province. Missing were Wilfredo Palapos, 46, and Ronald Calong, 26. All of them were assigned to the Army's 7th Infantry Division based in Limay, Bataan. Police said the body of Alcantara was found in a banca on Saturday while those of Jayawon and Remorin were found floating in waters off Cavite on Sunday.

Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Fires hit public markets

COTABATO CITY—Fire started by an electrical short circuit hit the public market of Buluan, Maguindanao on Wednesday, destroying close to P20 million worth of property and valuables. SFO2 Ruben Sapalon, Buluan fire bureau chief, said the fire started at the Sharon Janice bakeshop owned by Sharon Uy at the heart of the newly constructed public market building. No one was reported injured. Fire officers from Tacurong City, Koronadal City and nearby areas helped put out the fire. In Zamboanga City, fire razed at least 40 stalls at the old public market also on Wednesday. *Edwin O. Fernandez and Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Anti-NPA 'lumad' slain

MATI, Davao Oriental—A Mandaya lumad leader who led a tribal war against the communist New People's Army (NPA) was killed by suspected rebels in Baganga town on Wednesday. For more than 20 years, Pedro Mapando, 54, urged his fellow lumad to support the war he declared against the NPA. Mapando said the rebels' entry into their villages had displaced them and turned their community into a battleground for government forces and the insurgents. He was shot in the head as he drank with his friends at home.

Ferdinand O. Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Defensor asks Lapids to let DENR handle Pampanga quarry

TARLAC CITY—Environment Secretary Michael Defensor urged the Pampanga provincial government to agree to a partnership with his agency's corporate arm, the Natural Resources Development Corp., in managing the quarrying industry in the province.

Defensor also asked Pampanga officials to share part of its income from quarrying with the national government's reforestation program.

He aired the appeal on the eve of deliberations by Sangguniang Panlalawigan on NRDC's proposal that its chair, retired Lt. Gen. Victor Corpus, presented to the board last Monday.

"I've spoken to Sen. [Manuel] Lapid and [I asked him] if we can come up with an amenable solution, an amenable compromise to ensure that collections from quarry will be increased and at the same time, the proper agencies will be also benefited," Defensor told the INQUIRER.

Lapid and his son, Gov. Mark Lapid, vowed last week to oppose the second attempt by the NRDC to collect the taxes.

The agency took over in 1999 on the strength of ousted President Joseph Estrada's Proclamation 66. Lapid, as provincial quarry task force chief, reclaimed control in 2001 after the regional trial court upheld the authority of the provincial government to collect taxes.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, through Executive Order 224 in July 2003, failed to regain control as another local court made the same decision based on the provisions of the Local Government Code.

The younger Lapid has been invoking the same argument.

According to Defensor, Ms Arroyo was "aware of the decreased collections from quarry operations."

"And we are responding to this concern," he said.

Vice Gov. Joseller Guiao called attention to the wide discrepancy in revenues generated by the provincial government, saying the losses would have ended the local fiscal problems.

Last year's total revenue reached only P10.5 million or 52 percent of the P20-million target.

The NRDC collected P154 million in 1999. They collected the same amount of tax—P300 for every truckload of sand hauled out of Pampanga's eight sand-rich towns.

Defensor said he wanted municipal governments, especially, to benefit from the revenues.

He appealed to the Lapids and Corpus not to turn the quarry issue into a word war.

"We are all part of the same team...," he said. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Political season starts in ARMM

COTABATO CITY—The Commission on Elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has started preparations for elections for autonomous region officials set for August.

Renato Magbutay, ARMM election regional director, said those who would turn 18 years old on or before Aug. 8 and those who failed to register for the May 2004 elections are qualified to register.

The continuing registration in the ARMM's 98 municipalities started Jan. 17 and would end on March 15, according to Lentang Bedol, Maguindanao election supervisor.

ARMM is composed of the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and the city of Marawi.

Magbutay said election officers would also entertain corrections on registration entries such as misspelled names, dates of birth, birthplaces and typographical errors.

As of the last elections, ARMM has a total of about 900,000 registered voters.

The fifth ARMM regional elections were scheduled in November 2004 but a new law postponed it until August this year.

Without giving the expected number of new registrants, Magbutay said elections officials were surprised at "a very high" turn-out of new voters in various registration centers in the region.

He said the registration started in Tawi-Tawi's remote islands only yesterday.

"We expect a 10-percent increase in the current number of registered voters," Magbutay said.

The Comelec said it was also bent on running after multiple registrants.

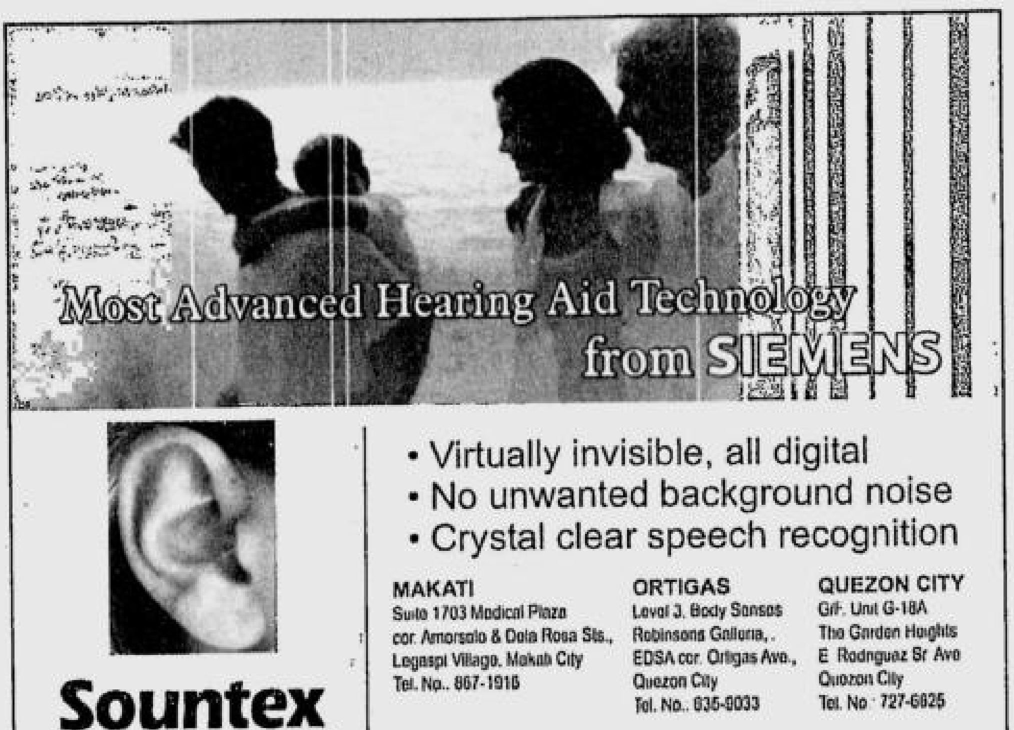
"We have summoned them to appear before the Comelec so we may know if there was a prima facie case to prosecute them," he said.

In November 2003, prior to the May 2004 national and local elections, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos had warned multiple registrants in the ARMM that "by December, the Comelec will have to file charges against them."

At the height of the 2004 political campaign, former Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen and newly retired RTC Judge Emmanuel Badoy were among the several prominent figures whose names appeared in the Comelec list of multiple registrants.

The two officials vowed to sue the poll body for "irresponsible and inaccurate listing."

"This is embarrassing and degrading on my part," said Badoy. *Edwin O. Fernandez and Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



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Jamby calls for Mike's resignation

From page A1

The senator called Defensor's claim a "blatant lie" and said he "may be ignorant of our past."

"The Madrigals have not been in logging for 40 years; we have not been in mining for a quarter of a century; we have not had interests in cement for a decade," she said.

Concession in Surigao

She said the Madrigal family was not engaged in activities harmful to the environment.

"We divested ourselves of such interests some time ago. And our logging concession, such as it was, was in Surigao and not, as Defensor claims, in Quezon or Aurora provinces," the senator said.

"We were never involved in logging in those provinces, and furthermore we disengaged from the logging industry before the particularly ruthless and widespread logging activities of the 1970s and 1980s, the effects of which I have mentioned in the past."

Madrigal noted that her family had not been involved in mining since 1979 when it divested itself of shares in Consolidated Mines. In the 1990s, she said, her family sold its holdings in Solid Cement.

She advised Defensor to revisit the nation's history before making sweeping and "baseless" statements.

"Juvenile as he is," Defensor should apologize for maligning her family and "betraying his office," she said. "Defensor has merely been intemperate in his remarks, and an apology, which he owes me and my family, can settle the whole thing. An apology sincerely made will, indeed, be sincerely accepted."

No apology

But Defensor said he would never apologize to Madrigal.

"I don't think I will be doing that, but in the same light ... I have nothing against her. And if I see her, in the same manner in the past, I [will] greet her and give her the proper respect in accordance of her being a person and being a senator of the republic," he said.

He appeared to have backtracked from his scathing accusations against the senator, however.

Shortly after yesterday's inquiry into illegal logging conducted by the Senate committee on the environment headed by Sen. Pia Cayetano, Defensor urged Madrigal to bury the hatchet and "work together" with the government.

"I would call on the senator for reconciliation, for us to help each other in this illegal logging campaign. Her advocacy for the environment and her vision for the environment is the same as ours. We hope that instead of hitting one another, we could really help one another," said Defensor in an interview.

In trying to clarify his pronouncements, Defensor, however, contradicted himself.

Although he insisted that he was standing by his earlier "statement," he said his linking the Madrigals to illegal logging was done without careful study.

No research

"In fact, I have not even done thorough research. We're just aware of it. As regards to mining, the only reason we have documents was because the companies themselves submitted (the names of the owners)," he said.

He clarified that he was not blaming the Madrigals for the rampant illegal logging in Quezon and Aurora.

"*Ay hindi, hindi naman.* In fact *baka nakatulong sa ekonomiya yung mga negosyo nilang ganun, e* (No, not really. In fact, their businesses might have helped the economy)," Defensor said.

He said he was forced to say those things against the Madrigals because "they were belittling what we're doing" to "fix the economy."

"I'm wondering why when we're pushing for these industries, we're being criticized," said Defensor, insisting that it was wrong of the senator to say that the anti-illegal logging task force was not going after the big guns.

Disregard of prudence

During interpellation, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago appealed to Madrigal not to file libel charges against her "juvenile" nephew, a son of her first cousin, Rep. Matias Defensor.

Santiago said her nephew had committed not "reckless disregard of the truth" but "reckless disregard of prudence."

"I hope that (Madrigal) will take the young age of Secretary Defensor into consideration. Also, the concern of the rest of his extended family to which Secretary Defensor belongs might help to alleviate the genuine sense of pain that seems to have been evoked in the heart and mind of our colleague," she said.

"So I plead with her honor to take recent negative developments in this light. The rest of the Defensor family continue to respect and love the Madrigal family. (Madrigal should) overlook the exuberant excesses of a young man and to rest assured that his other relatives will take very good care that his education is improved as soon as possible," Santiago said.

She noted that she was special assistant to the late Supreme Court Justice Vicente Abad Santos (Madrigal's uncle), who was a "mentor in public life."

Madrigal thanked Santiago, saying "words have been said, damage done, so things have to be set in order."

In her speech, Madrigal said Defensor played "fast and free with the truth," and "he has taken it upon himself to be particularly careless with the facts when it comes to me."

"He has disparaged me by saying that I am someone more interested in making speeches and being in the limelight than in actually doing something substantive to achieve the goals of environmental protection. He has gone too far. He has perverted the truth and poisoned public discourse," she said.

Grandfather's patriotism

She said the nation did not forget that the rebuilding of the University of Santo Tomas, the Quezon Institute and Highway 54 (now Edsa), and that the land on which Camp Aguinaldo and the New Bilibid Prisons were built, "are but amongst the many other landmarks that was the fruit of my grandfather's patriotism."

She said the role that the Madrigals played in helping build this nation before the Marcoses took over, "is one of which we are proud."

"Our country's history cannot be read without mention of the ideas and ideals that impelled my family to be involved in the said enterprises. President [Manuel] Quezon said of my grandfather Vicente Madrigal that he made his money the old-fashioned way—he earned it, without benefit of corruption.

"My grandfather and my father answered the call for industrial development after the First World War, the time when the businesses Defensor alleges I continue to possess began. In fact, it was President Quezon and the past presidents who asked my ancestors to take up such tasks so as to help build, and rebuild our nation."

On the maternal side of her family, the senator said that apart from Justice Jose Abad Santos, it was recorded in history books that her grand uncle, Pedro Abad Santos, the founder of the socialist movement in the country, gave away all his landholdings and lived with the peasants of Sagada.

"My forebears helped our nation attain the greatness it once had. And if Defensor's defamation is what they deserve today for their past patriotism, no wonder our country is where it is today. In the hands of the administration Defensor serves," she said.

Madrigal reminded Defensor that he had yet to become a senator.

"It might help to remind him of something I mentioned in the beginning of my remarks. Defensor's job is to implement and enforce the law. My job ... is to do whatever is lawful and necessary to draft and pass legislation. Furthermore, Defensor is a creature of the administration ... while I am a member of the opposition. He and I, therefore, have divergent views when it comes both to the programs, and the implementation of the programs, of the administration he serves," she said.

Madrigal said she had conducted hearings in order to inquire into "the effects of the devastation caused by legal and illegal logging, and its effects on indigenous peoples, in aid of legislation," and filed bills "raising illegal logging to the level of a heinous crime."

Fisherfolk group mocks DENR secretary's claim

By Norman Bordadora

THE FISHERFOLK group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas yesterday mocked Environment Secretary Michael Defensor's allegation that some of its members helped illegal loggers take logs out of the forests of General Nakar town in Quezon with their small boats.

"For Defensor's information those helping big loggers in Quezon are the police and military. This is the report of the church leaders and residents there," said Pamalakaya spokesperson Gerry Albert Corpuz.

"How can *bancas* powered by just 8-horsepower motors or by rowing paddles carry tons upon tons of logs (through the Umiray River and into the open sea)?" he said.

Pamalakaya on Saturday scored the government's anti-illegal logging task force for failing to file charges against the top six illegal loggers who also happen to be the top "legal" logging corporations in Quezon and Aurora provinces.

Defensor on Sunday countered that Pamalakaya and other critics of the anti-illegal logging campaign should stop criticizing the government efforts and instead help them in the program.

The secretary went on to say that Pamalakaya should give information on "their members" who were helping illegal loggers take logs out of the forest via the Umiray River.

"Defensor should welcome our efforts in naming big logging syndicates which obtained Palace permits to plunder and operate large-scale logging. Instead of hurling malicious accusations against us, Defensor should prosecute these big loggers," Corpuz said.

"Why can't he file charges against the six big commercial logging companies? The fishermen have been the victims and now they are the ones being made to look bad," he added.

Defensor said on Sunday that opposition Sen. Jamby Madrigal and Pamalakaya betrayed their ignorance of the law when they pushed for the immediate filing of charges against the big-time illegal loggers while the government was still building up the case against them.

"We know the law Defensor is talking about. It is the law which legalized plunder and corporate logging, the basis behind left and right large scale logging," Corpuz said.

Gov accuses top DENR exec of protecting Zamboanga loggers

From page A1

Aurora and Nueva Ecija. The disasters were also traced to rampant logging in the Sierra Madre, which abuts the three provinces.

No violation

But Defensor denied that the transport of logs violated the Dec. 6 ban.

In a phone interview, he explained that the logs covered by the Dec. 24 memo were "allowed to go out" because they were cut before the imposition of the ban.

He said the logs were found to be "prior cut" as per review and validation by his department, adding that other prior-cut batches are now undergoing similar reviews.

PAJE

The Paje memorandum bore the name of Defensor, but Paje affixed his signature over the secretary's printed name, the governor said.

"We in Zamboanga del Norte are calling on President Arroyo to form an independent body to look into why Paje gave Dacon an exemption from the logging ban," Yebes said in a telephone interview.

Yebes said Paje "appears to give royal treatment and undue advantage" to Dacon Logging.

"Under the cloak and cover of the Paje memorandum," the company could transport and process logs cut even before Dec. 8, he said.

The governor said Task Force Kalasangan, which he heads, was formed last Dec. 9 to implement Defensor's memorandum. "Kalasangan" is a Cebuano term for "forest."

Zamboanga del Norte created the task force to protect its people from killer landslides that could result from denuded forests.

Responding to Defensor's directive, the task force conducted an inventory of all cut logs in the Triple S-B area, and found more than 2,000 pieces of logs in the log ponds and decks in Sirawai.

Tipped off

When its members inspected the log decks in Sirawai on Jan. 10, the logs had disappeared, according to Yebes.

"We were told that a barge left for Recodo in Zamboanga City on that morning. Somebody tipped off our inspection," Yebes said.

The government and private sectors, including Msgr. Jose Maguiran and Msgr. Edgar Agura, are represented in the task force.

"How can we implement the Defensor memo when his own undersecretary also issued a contradicting memo?" Yebes said.

The DENR has approved at least 20 Ifmas (Integrated Forest Management Agreements) in Zamboanga del Norte. Most of them are in Sibuco, Sioco, Sirawai and Baliguian towns where a substantial portion is known as "Dacon territory," according to Yebes.

An Ifma allows the holder to conduct logging activities, he explained.

Among the Ifma holders are two Consunji-owned corporations—Sirawai Plywood and Lumber Corp., which was permitted to cut trees in 33,000 ha in Barangay Guban in Sirawai, and 2,128 ha in Litawan, Sibuco, and Sodaco Agricultural Corp., with 11,874 ha in the boundaries of Baliguian and Gutalac.

Lee Peng Wee, too

At least 15 individuals, including Zamboanga City businessman Lee Peng Wee, Sirawai Mayor Romeo Cariño and Councilor Venancio Villalobos, were granted Ifmas. They were allowed to operate logging concessions in forest areas ranging from 529 ha to 998 ha, according to the list of Ifma holders given to the INQUIRER.

Yebes said Cariño was a former Consunji employee and "Dacon made him a mayor."

The other holders were "dummies of Dacon," Yebes claimed. "One needs at least 5 million per hectare for logging operations. These people don't have that money. Some don't even know what is covered in their Ifma."

Zamboanga del Norte has around 100,000 ha of forest cover, mainly in Sibuco, Siocon, Sirawai and Baliguian.

In mid-2002, the Triple S-B areas gained national prominence when Abu Sayyaf bandits led by Aldam Tilao moved their captives, American missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham, from Basilan to the thick forests in Sirawai and Sibuco to elude a military dragnet.

Yebes said the areas "are [one of] the last frontiers" of the country's forest cover, now estimated at 800,000 ha. *With a report from Volt Contreras*

PNP sacks 2 cops who 'pressured' Aklan amok

From page A1

quiry yesterday into the incident, senators told police investigators to dig deeper into what had caused the bloodshed.

Hot seat

Police officials were in the hot seat as some members of the Senate committee on public order and illegal drugs, chaired by Sen. Manuel Villar Jr., expressed skepticism at the initial findings presented to them by the police.

In a PowerPoint presentation, police officials told senators that the results of the investigation showed that Moreño "acted alone out of extreme pressure exerted by people close" to Cuadra.

They named Velasco and Laguna as the ones who supposedly offered the bribe to Moreño so he would no longer stand as a witness against Cuadra.

Also allegedly offered a bribe was PO1 Gilbert Diaz, who was also involved in arresting Cuadra.

The police findings also considered the incident an "isolated" case.

Repeated bribe offers

Chief investigator George Corpus told the senators that Laguna offered Moreño and Diaz the bribe money several times starting in July 2003 until December last year.

The bribe offer ranged from an initial P150,000 to P500,000, the senators were told.

Diaz said that based on interviews with Moreño's family, the police officer had sought a transfer to his home province of Negros Occidental to avoid Laguna, who was allegedly pestering him to take the bribe.

Asked about Laguna's association with Cuadra, Lomibao said Laguna had been assigned once to guard the suspected drug lord following reports that the latter planned to bolt the Aklan jail, where he is detained. Asked for proof that Laguna was "at the beck and call of Cuadra," Corpus said that police had interviewed Cuadra himself and the latter had told investigators he would do everything to settle his case "and that one way was through Laguna."

'Hearsay evidence'

Asked by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile how investigators reached their findings, Lomibao said they relied on the testimony given to them by Diaz himself.

But police officials conceded they had yet to get Diaz's sworn statement on the matter.

"Those are hearsay evidence," Enrile replied.

Asked by Sen. Panfilo Lacson whether the police had already confronted the two police officers who supposedly offered the bribe to Moreño and Diaz, Corpuz said that he had yet to interview them.

Enrile said police investigators should dig deeper because, so far, the results of the investigation "would not stand" in court.

This prompted Chief Supt. George Aliño, regional police director, to say that the findings they presented were "preliminary" and that the probe was continuing.

Aliño also said that aside from the angle of Moreño going on a rampage because of pressure from fellow police officers not to stand as a witness against Cuadra, police were also "looking at the personal angle dealing with the life of Moreño, the problems of his family, his promotion ... which may have aggravated his mental state."

Sen. Alfredo Lim told investigators to get the testimony of Moreño's wife.

Lim said he had learned that Moreño had told his wife that in case he was killed, the person to look for would be Laguna. This was "vital information" and should be investigated, he said.

Top Customs exec. . .

From page A1

States," Assistant Ombudsman Ernesto Nocos said in a statement released yesterday afternoon.

"Last June 2003, she attended the graduation of her son in the United States, where she had sent him for schooling," added Nocos, who also serves as spokesperson of the antigraft office.

Hernandez, on the other hand, was found guilty of grave misconduct and dishonesty for serving as a "dummy" in Aguilar's ownership of an Isuzu Trooper, which was "regularly under the control and possession of Aguilar."

"According to Ombudsman investigators, it is incomprehensible how a customs officer with a regular salary of P14,098 can afford to buy a vehicle worth P1.5 million and merely allow someone else to use the same," Nocos said.

In his order, Marcelo said the case records were "replete with substantial evidence that clearly showed that the respondents manifestly violated the law and flagrantly disregarded established rules."

"Their actions displayed their disposition to lie, cheat, deceive and defraud, and thus constitute grave misconduct and dishonesty," he added.

The Ombudsman's dismissal order also carried with it "accessory penalties," such as the cancellation of eligibility, forfeiture of retirement benefits, and perpetual disqualification for reemployment in the government service of the two customs officials.

Aguilar is among the first set of Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Internal Revenue and Department of Public Works and Highways officials charged with graft for failing the government's lifestyle check program.

The case against Aguilar was filed by the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) which was tapped by the Lifestyle Check Coalition to investigate officials suspected of having enriched themselves while in office.

Aguilar was not available for comment yesterday. Earlier, she had accused PNP-CIDG officials of trying to extort P5 million in exchange for clearing her name in the graft case.

CIDG officials have denied Aguilar's accusations.

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Foul odor irks bay residents

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A COLD storage facility in Navotas is feeling the heat after some residents of Barangay North Bay Boulevard complained about the stench and smoke allegedly coming from the warehouse.

Residents living near the VIFEL 2 Cold Storage Facility said in a letter sent to barangay officers that they could no longer bear the "smoke and foul odor of spoiled meat" coming from the facility.

The warehouse on M. Naval Street Interior also emitted the smell of ammonia, they added.

Several processed meat companies have stored their products inside the facility.

But a vacant lot inside the compound had been turned into a dump after the municipal garbage hauler stopped collecting trash from the facility a year ago, an employee told the INQUIRER.

The smoke apparently came from the burning trash.

Sought for reaction, warehouse supervisor Rafael Monterde admitted they used to maintain a dump inside the compound. But he said they had stopped using the dump a week ago.

The daily garbage collection had already resumed, Monterde explained.

He added that the smell of ammonia could have enveloped the area when they shut down operations two days ago to install additional equipment. Operations are back to normal, Monterde said.

"There is no danger. Otherwise, the employees (inside the facility) would be the first to be affected," he added.

NTC orders chat room shutdown

By Clarissa S. Batino

CABLE operators have been ordered by the National Telecommunications Commission to shut down all chat rooms in reaction to complaints that some of these had become sex channels.

The NTC order dated Jan. 20 immediately called for the suspension of all chat rooms until a set of guidelines have been approved.

Only recently, police detained a businessman for allegedly operating a cybersex facility in Las Piñas City.

NTC chair Ronald Solis said he would meet with operators like the Philippine Cable Television Association and the Federation of International Cable TV Associations of the Philippines this week to come up with guidelines aimed at preventing abuses on cable chat channels.

Cable operators turn idle channels into chat rooms or community billboards.

Solis said some chat room operators were not regulating the use of profane language or explicit messages in their facilities. Worse, some messages openly solicit sex, he added.

Meanwhile, police yesterday said it discovered what could be indications of money laundering after going through evidence confiscated from the office of Aloysious M. Galvez, owner of Orgasmic Studios in Pilar Village, Las Piñas City, which was raided by police last Friday.

Supt. Michel Filart, of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-National Capital Region, said transaction records between Orgasmic Studios Inc. and several banks here and abroad were among those discovered after the raid conducted by elements from CIDG-NCR and local police.

Filart, however, refused to go into details.

"We are now coordinating with members of the Anti-Money Laundering Act Council (Amlac) in connection with our investigation of Galvez's activities," he said.

The Amlac also promised to help if violations of the electronic commerce law are included in the "predicate offenses," Filart added.

According to investigators, Galvez's outfit reportedly maintained links with several web page networks based in the United States.

"The Internet protocol address was found to be linked to several US web pages featuring Internet photography," Filart said.

He added that a big telecommunications company gave them full support by providing them information needed in carrying out the raid at Orgasmic Studios located at Daisy and Lead Streets, Pilar Village, where the 14 studios that provided Internet sex were located.

Galvez, now detained at the Las Piñas City jail, is facing charges of violating Republic Act No. 9028, also known as the Anti-Trafficking of Persons Act.

Filart added that Galvez's business, which reportedly earned for him a lucrative income, had been in existence for more than a year now.

The girls allegedly hired for cybersex earned as high as P200,000 a month, police investigators said. *With a report from Nancy C. Carvajal*

NEW LOOK

SPO1 Felino Estrada tries on his new dentures as National Capital Region Police Director Avelino Razon Jr. looks on. The dentures were given for free as part of a dental outreach program for law enforcers. JOAN BONDOC

Makati fire station is No. 1

THE MAKATI Fire Department (MFD) was recently named Best Fire Station in the National Capital Region for 2004, the 10th award given to the department. F/Chief Insp. Rachel Avilla, officer-in-charge of the MFD, said the NCR's Bureau of Fire Protection was "impressed" with the MFD's accomplishments.

There were three major fires in Makati last year, as compared to five in 2003, the MFD said. Minor fires were down to 35 from 60, and damage in properties fell to P10 million from P20 million.

Sr. Insp. Romel Tradio said the MFD conducts fire prevention seminars in barangays and business firms on a regular basis with help from the Rotary Club of Japan which donated two aerial ladders to the department. *Irene C. Perez*

4 fall in counterfeit gang bust

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A TEXT message calling for help sent to the Western Police District (WPD) on Saturday led to the arrest of four alleged members of a counterfeit syndicate.

Task Force Galugad of the WPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit seized several fake dollar bills, cash bonds and gold bullion certificates from a syndicate which allegedly sold them to unwary clients at a cheaper price.

Responding to a text message to police from businessman Roland Sanchez, allegedly a victim of the group, the task force conducted a buy-bust operation at the Half Moon Pension House on the corner of Gen. Malvar and Jorge Bocobo Streets in Ermita, Manila, around 4 a.m. on Saturday.

Chief Insp. Alejandro Yanquiling, task force head, said the operation led to the arrest of suspects Antonio Berengel, 47; Marcos Bondoc, 49, and Teofilo Mariano, 56, all from Sta. Rosa, Laguna, and Ricardo Caisip, 50, of Davao City.

Found inside the suspects' house were two suitcases filled with fake dollar bills, including $100 denominations, cash bonds and gold bullion certificates with forged signatures of deposed President Ferdinand Marcos.

We might as well get rid of our courts

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

IF YOU want to know why the ranks of the New People's Army (NPA) are increasing, take a second, hard look at our justice system.

You'll find that our judges and prosecutors pay only lip service to the saying, "Justice delayed is justice denied." They're the ones who delay the delivery of justice to citizens who seek redress through our courts. The following story is an example:

On Dec. 24, 1999, PO1 Edgar P. Fernandez allegedly shot and killed Jaime Gecomo Jr., a construction worker, at the Baseco Compound in Tondo, Manila. Fernandez mistook the victim for another person whom the police wanted to arrest.

The victim's parents, Jaime Sr. and Delia, filed a case for murder against the policeman because their son was shot in the back of the head. But the judge allowed Fernandez to post bail even if murder is supposed to be a nonbailable offense.

The case, which is being heard by Manila Judge Felixberto Olalia, has dragged on for four years without any end in sight.

Teodoro Adena, the victim's uncle, said that the cause of the delay is the constant absence of the judge, the prosecutor and, worse, Fernandez, the respondent policeman.

"*Kung wala yung* judge, postponed *ang pagdinig ng kaso*; *kung wala yung piskal*, postponed *ang pagdinig ng kaso*; *kung wala yung akusado*, postponed *din ang kaso* (The absences of the judge, the prosecutor or the accused have caused the postponements of the trial)," Adena told this writer.

Adena said that since the trial started in the year 2000, two prosecution witnesses had already died of natural causes. And these witnesses were not even able to testify because of the constant postponements.

Exasperated, Gecomo Sr., 46, has gone back to Samar and joined the NPA, according to Adena, his brother-in-law.

Some of Gecomo Sr.'s relatives have also joined him in taking to the hills. Now, can you blame Gecomo Sr.?

Gecomo's story is not an isolated case. Every day, the number of NPA members and their sympathizers swell because they cannot get prompt justice from the government.

Barrio folks perceive—and sometimes, rightly—that the NPA gives them instant justice like when they execute a suspected cattle rustler for stealing a poor farmer's carabao.

The delay in the administration of justice by the courts is the biggest reason why vigilante groups have mushroomed in many parts of the country like Davao City and Cebu City.

The vigilante groups in the two cities have the tacit blessing of its residents.

If citizens keep putting justice into their own hands, we might as well get rid of our courts.

* * *

Philippine National Police chief Edgar Aglipay was summoned to the Senate yesterday to be harassed by senators for allegedly raising his voice in a conversation with Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

The senator had complained that Aglipay shouted at him over the cellular phone when he asked the waiving of some restrictions for his father, deposed President Erap, who was returning from Hong Kong.

Jinggoy didn't take into consideration the fact that because of the distance between Manila and Hong Kong, where he was calling from, there could have been technical interference, prompting the PNP chief to speak in a voice louder than usual. Or, Aglipay, under pressure to protect Erap's life from saboteurs and quell a destabilization plan against the government to coincide with the ex-President's arrival, probably raised his voice in exasperation over impossible requests.

Go ahead, honorable senators, indulge the juvenile temper tantrum of your colleague! And make yourselves the laughing stock of the nation.

Now, MMDA wants pastors' help in counseling defiant pedestrians

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AFTER wet flags and pink prison vans, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando is now thinking of coordinating with pastors to help discipline hardheaded pedestrians.

"The pastors, who could come from different religious groups, could lecture jaywalkers on how to conduct themselves properly on the streets," Fernando told reporters yesterday.

As former mayor of Marikina City, Fernando said he had also asked the help of local pastors to counsel traffic violators, especially recalcitrant pedestrians.

"This project worked in Marikina. I do not see how it would fail in the rest of Metro Manila," Fernando said. "Pastors and leaders of other religious groups could volunteer to be a part of our education team who would give lectures to violators inside prison vans."

The MMDA started deploying three pink prison vans yesterday morning to back up the seven wet flag trucks that are presently patrolling the metropolis on the lookout for pedestrians who stray from designated waiting areas.

MMDA officials had said that pedestrians who insist on blocking the roads would immediately be "jailed" inside the vans and lectured on traffic rules and safety.

The prison vans held more than 50 jaywalkers yesterday along Edsa, Fernando said.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Executive Director Angelito Vergel de Dios had said that 90 percent of violators had been prevented from blocking the roads since the scheme took off.

Watch out for these whistle-blowers

By Tarra V. Quismundo

HE DID not need much practice. Just lots of lung-power and confidence.

PO1 Antonio Agtarap Jr. never thought his whistle-blowing skills would gain him recognition in his five years as a law enforcer.

But his creative rendition of the Philippine National Police Hymn using his whistle, while demonstrating how to apprehend a snatcher on the street, got him second place in the first-ever whistle-blowing competition of the Western Police District.

"I only learned that I was a contestant yesterday. I did not need much practice, because whistle-blowing came with my training," said Agtarap.

He was the second-best whistle-blower among the top three policemen out of the 30 law enforcers from different WPD stations and district divisions who competed in the event. For his skill, he received a certificate of recognition and P2,000.

Third-placer was Insp. Elsa Mazo, detailed at the District Comptrollership and Finance Division, and an officer for 24 years now. For her different styles of blowing her whistle, she was given a certificate and P1,000.

Topping the contest with a P3,000 cash prize was PO3 Romeo Relox from the Pandacan police station who has been in service for eight years now.

Judges chose the winners based on the neatness, originality and creativity of their performances.

"Using the whistle is more effective than drawing your firearm and firing it to catch a criminal," Agtarap said.

"If you fire your gun, instead of calling the attention of the one you are warning, chances are, he will run away," he said.

"And there is also the possibility that the bullet could hit someone," he added.

The WPD's whistle-blowing contest is part of its campaign for police to once again use their whistles in crime prevention.

MANILA policeman Antonio Lobigas shows his superiors how he uses the whistle—and in style—during a whistle-blowing contest at the Western Police District headquarters yesterday. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

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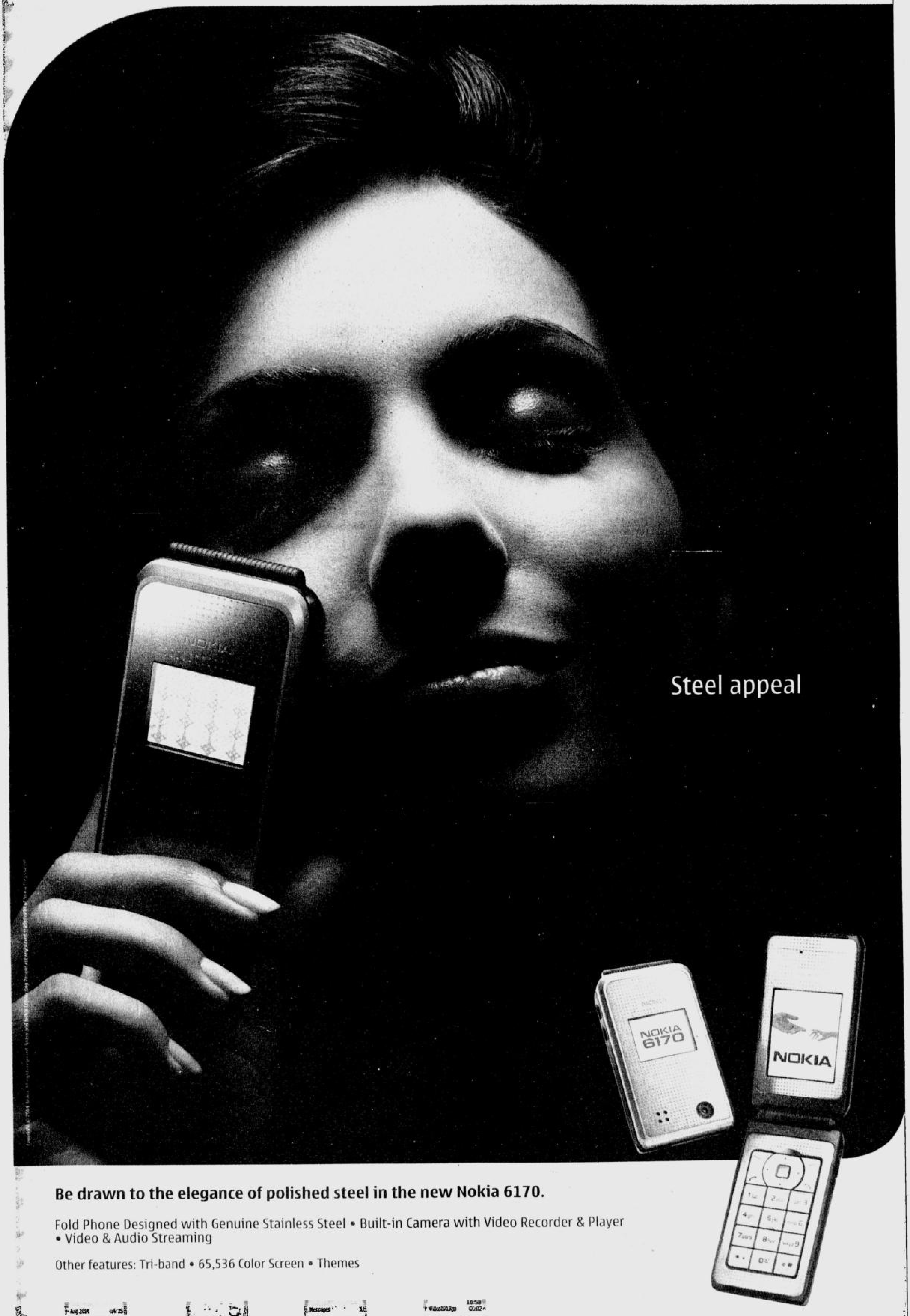

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Compiled by L. Manguiat

TENNIS: 2005 Australian Open Quarterfinals; 8 a.m. and 4::30 p.m. (r - 10 p.m.); Day 9 Highlights; 8 p.m.: STAR Sports - It's down to the final 16.

BASKETBALL: NBA - Pistons vs T-Wolves; 9 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports -Defending champion Detroit battles Minnesota.

US NCAA - Syracuse vs Rutgers; 8 a.m.; Oklahoma vs Oklahoma State; 10 a.m.; ESPN - It's rivalry week in the power conferences in the US.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

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- Roddick makes final 8; Russian aces lose steam /A22

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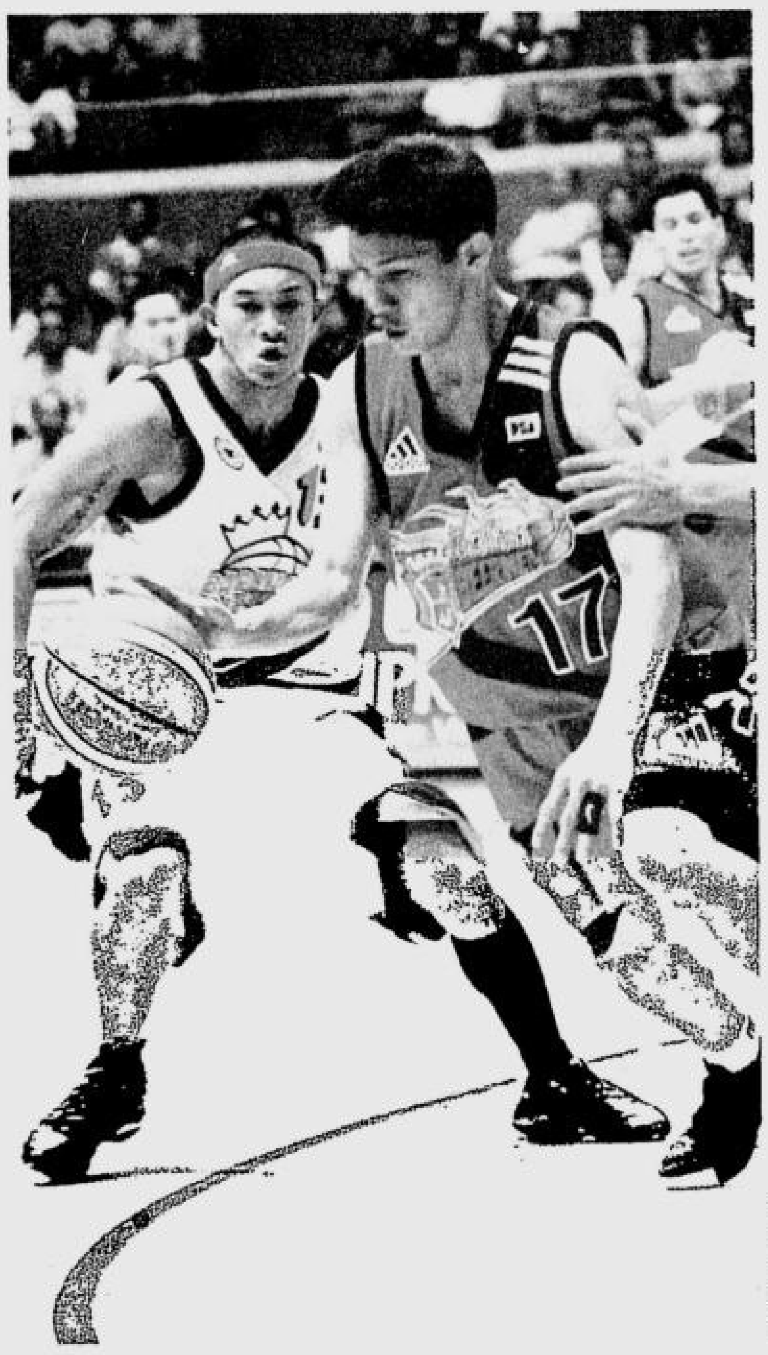

OLSEN Racela of San Miguel breaks loose from Ginebra's defense in Game 2 of their semifinal series at the Araneta Coliseum.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Siot takes the blame for Game 3 debacle

GAME TOMORROW (*Araneta Coliseum*)
7:10 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Barangay Ginebra

COACH Siot Tanquingcen is man enough to admit his shortcomings.

Yesterday, the sophomore Barangay Ginebra coach took full responsibility for the defeat the Gin Kings absorbed in the pivotal Game 3 of their semifinal series against the San Miguel Beermen.

"I lost Game 3 because I was simply outcoached," said Tanquingcen after the Gin Kings took a 96-91 loss in the Gran Matador Philippine Cup best-of-five duel Sunday night.

With a 2-1 lead, coach Jong Uichico and the Beermen could wrap it up tomorrow and arrange a best-of-seven championship showdown with the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals.

"It was not their (Gin Kings) fault," said Tanquingcen. "I wasn't able to do what should have been done.

TANQUINGCEN

"I didn't give them the right instructions on what to look for or what to do in the court. The problem was not situational. It was basically the shots that San Miguel took away from us in the endgame."

The Gin Kings fell silent—along with the majority of the 12,905 crowd at the Big Dome—for almost six minutes going into the final stretch as the Beermen mounted a final, telling surge.

Mark Caguioa and Eric Menk were bottled up by San Miguel's smothering defense while Rodney Santos failed to find his range.

"San Miguel was more prepared for us," said Tanquingcen of his former ballclub. "They made several adjustments and the coaching staff did an excellent job getting the team back into the groove."

Tanquingcen was Uichico's assistant coach in San Miguel for many seasons before taking the coaching reins from Allan Caidic at Barangay Ginebra last year.

Tanquingcen said the Gin Kings would be making only minimal adjustments in Game 4. He expects everything to boil down to intensity level and execution.

"If there are adjustments to make, it will only be a few," he said. "It will be more on fine-tuning because you can't be drastic on changing a formula that has been working for you in the series."

The Gin Kings did a fine job limiting Danny Seigle's scoring output but it only allowed the Beermen to launch a balanced scoring attack.

Seigle, who averaged 35.5 points in Games 1 and 2, had only 14 points in Game 3, but Olsen Racela and Dondon Hontiveros picked up the scoring slack.

"They (Beermen) tried to get more players involved and it means their game plan worked," said Tanquingcen.

SMC adopts RP five

By June Navarro

NO LESS than giant firm San Miguel Corp. will be the godfather of the national team being formed by the Philippine Basketball Association.

Commissioner Noli Eala announced this yesterday after a PBA board meeting where the country's largest food and beverage company was approved as the title sponsor of the national team to this year's Fiba-Asian championships and other tournaments.

Eala said SMC will shoulder the expenses of the team even as the Board of Governors decided to further scrutinize the budget proposal of RP coach Chot Reyes.

Eala said the board had already approved a P50-million war chest for the team this year but is still looking for areas where it can stretch the budget.

"It doesn't mean the training of the national team will be hampered," Eala said. "The program will continue while the budget is

SMC/A21

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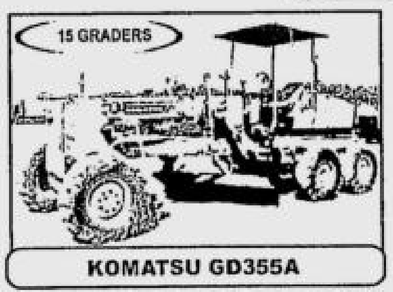

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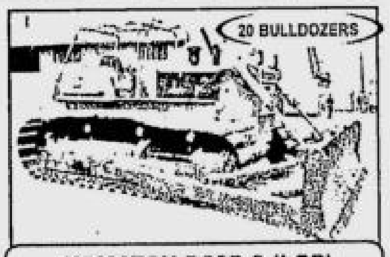

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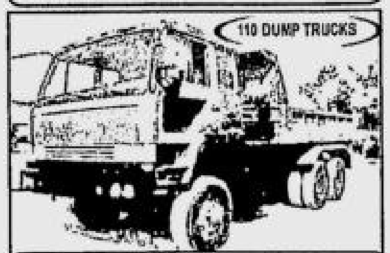

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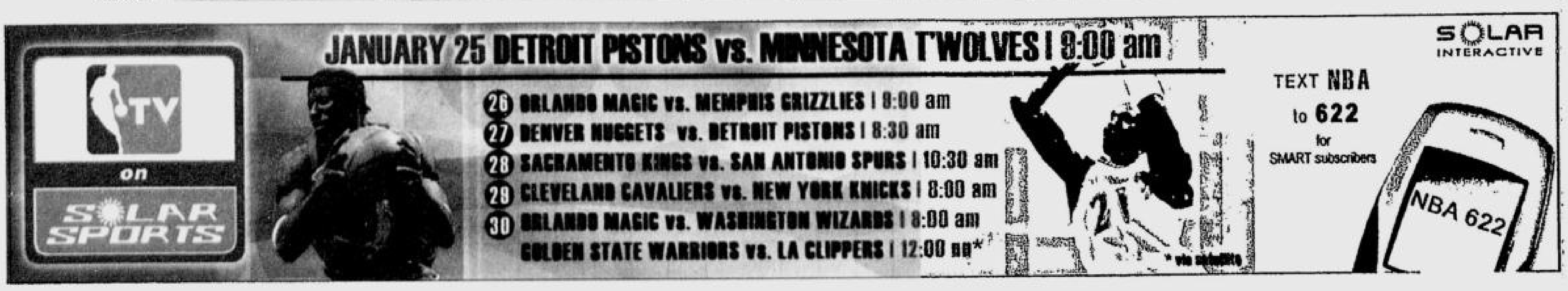

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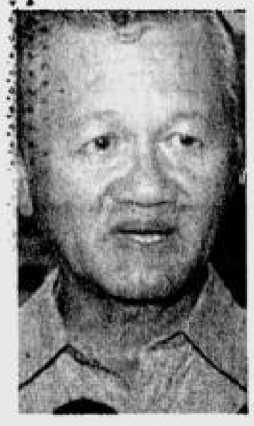

COJUANGCO

Derby, stakes races to boost SEA Games funds

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Olympic Committee will tap horse racing and cockfighting as additional sources of funds for the Southeast Asian Games the country will host this November.

POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco announced this yesterday when he attended the 15th anniversary celebration of the Philippine Sports Commission.

Cojuangco, a big-time cocker and horse owner, said the derby would be held at the Araneta Coliseum and the races at the San Lazaro Leisure Park in Carmona, Cavite.

He said the SEAG preparations are "slowly but surely falling into line" and that all the committees will meet next to define their roles including "aspects that we didn't see before."

"I'm very confident that we will meet all the deadlines," said Cojuangco.

He also said the country prefers buying brand new equipment for the SEAG abroad rather than accept Vietnam's offer to lend some of the equipment it used two years ago.

"It looks good," said Cojuangco of the Vietnam offer. "But if you look at the cost of transporting them here, installing them, and then after the SEA Games, bringing it back to Vietnam, we could be spending more.

"We might as well buy new ones that exactly meet our needs and we can also use in the future."

The POC chief, who is also the vice chair of the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee, said there are also last-minute changes in the venues, particularly in skeet shooting, which is being proposed to be held in the facilities owned by Gov. Chavit Singson in Ilocos Sur.

He said the Philsoc marketing committee is also planning a wide-scale public information drive to get as many people involved in the country's third hosting of the Games as possible.

Magnolia, Montaña gun for clinchers

COACH Koy Banal fears fatigue may catch up with the Magnolia-FEU Wizards.

GAMES TODAY
(*Makati Coliseum*)
(Game 2 of best-of-three semifinals)
2 p.m.—Magnolia-FEU vs Welcoat
4p.m.—Montaña vs Granny Goose

"The boys have been playing straight since 2003," he said. "As much as I want to give them a lot of rest, I can't."

But still there were no signs of weariness after Magnolia-FEU streaked to its 10th straight win at the expense of Welcoat in the PBL Open Championship last Friday.

"This team has been showing the right attitude," noted Banal, whose Wizards will try to sweep the Welcoat Paintmasters in Game 2 of their semifinal showdown at 2 p.m. today at the Makati Coliseum.

While the Wizards aim for their second straight trip to the finals, the Montaña Jewels will vie for their first appearance when they battle Granny Goose Tortillos in their own best-of-three series at 4 p.m.

"Winning the first game was very important but we have to finish it in Game 2," said coach Robert Sison after the Jewels triumphed in Game 1, 74-66. "We don't want the momentum to swing to Granny Goose."

The Wizards are also hoping to wrap it up, but Banal is bracing for a Welcoat comeback.

"Welcoat is a very strong team," he said. "They have the ability and the cast to figure out the best game plan. They can adjust at any given time."

And that's what Welcoat coach Caloy Garcia intends to do. "We're not going to allow them to finish the series," he said. "But to extend the series, we have to match Magnolia's intensity. It's not impossible to beat them two in a row."

Coach Jun Tan has similarly drawn some changes in the Tortillos' game plan. "We focused only on (Jon Dan) Salvador, (Alex) Compton and their two other shooters," he revealed. "It was a big mistake for us. After viewing the tapes, we are going to make big adjustments in Game 2."

Last Saturday, the Jewels unwrapped a surprise offensive package in Al Magpayo and Alwyn Espiritu, while the Tortillos expectedly leaned on JR Quiñahan. The hefty Granny Goose rookie did all the work as he piled up 18 points and 16 rebounds.

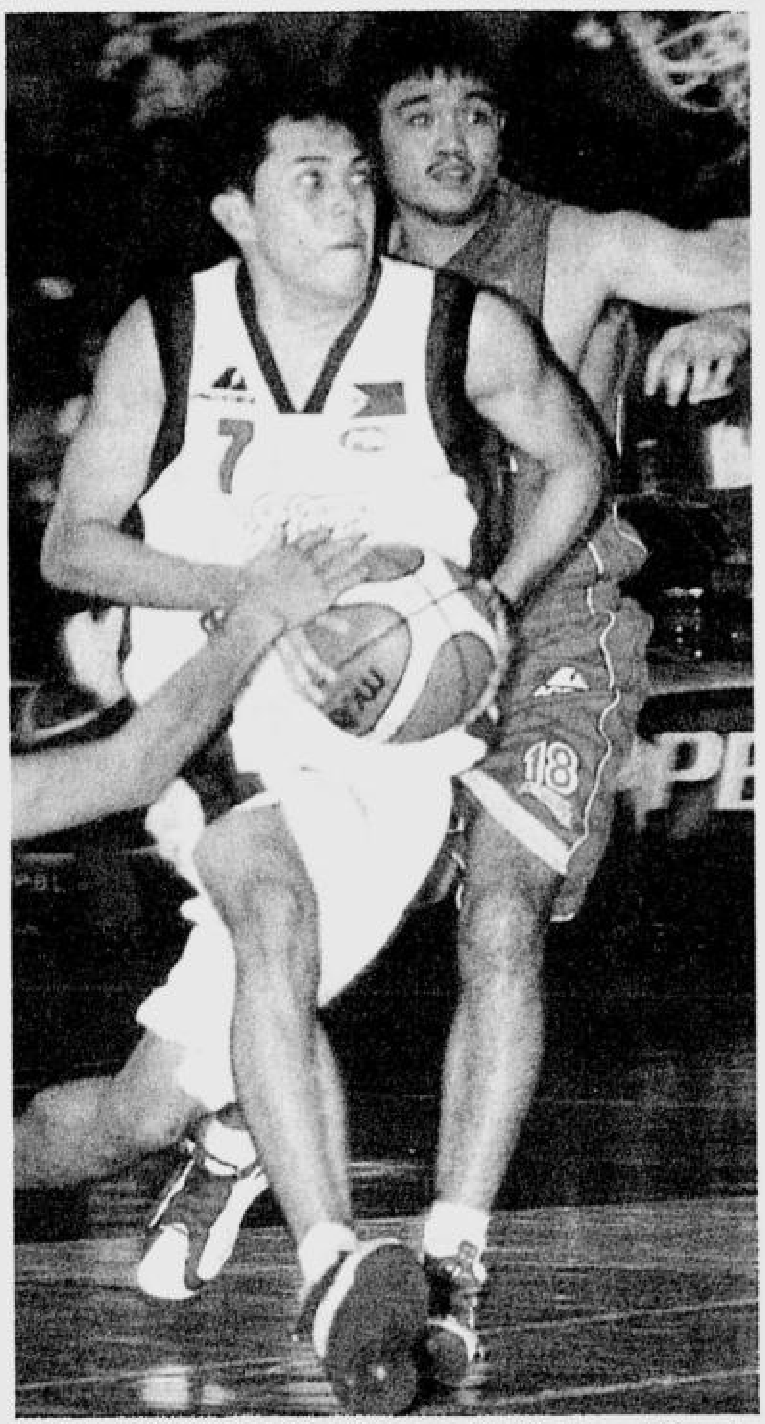
It was careless ball handling, however, that doomed the Tortillos. The rookie squad committed an unforgivable 18 more turnovers than the Jewels, 31-13.

With lead scorers Arwind Santos and Cesar Catli contained in Game 1, Magnolia-FEU got a big lift from Jason Misolas' 16-point performance as the Wizards won, 61-54.

Welcoat, though, got good plays from Marvin Ortiguerra and Anthony Washington. After a lethargic first half, the duo staged a third-quarter attack that erased a 30-18 halftime Wizards' lead.

But the Paintmasters rally lost steam in the closing minutes.

Jasmine W. Payo


RAUL Latonio of Granny Goose drives past Paul Guerrero of Montaña during their game last Friday.
AUGUST DELA CRUZ

V-LEAGUE

PSC Legends take on Lady Pirates

By Musong R. Castillo

GAMES TODAY
(*Rizal Coliseum*)
3 p.m.—Far Eastern University vs San Sebastian
5 p.m.—PSC vs Lyceum

COACH Tats Suzara believes his Philippine Sports Commission Lady Legends are ready for the finals and those standing in their way will be casualties of their title quest.

The Legends try to prove Suzara right when they clash with Lyceum at 5 p.m. today in the Shakey's V-League at the Rizal Coliseum.

Against the Legends whose roster is now down to nine, the Lady Pirates are in desperate need of a win to live another day.

"We're peaking at the right time," coach Suzara said yesterday. "Just right for the finals. We don't care who we play. We just want to beat any team we play."

PSC is in third spot with a 6-4 card and a win today would not only knock the Lady Pirates out of further contention, but assure the Legends of the No. 3 seeding in the final four.

Suzara predicted his team would go all the way last Sunday, quite a strong statement considering the strength of the teams ahead of the Legends in the standings.

Santo Tomas, the defending champion, is at 10-1, while La Salle, the reigning UAAP titlist, has won its last nine games after opening up with a loss to the Tigresses on opening day.

"We can see the quality of the players in a long tournament like this," Suzara added. "While we are slowly getting into shape, the others are struggling to win their games."

Though he did not actually say it, Suzara was referring to the Tigresses and the Lady Archers, who are winning in struggling fashions.

Santo Tomas was pushed to a deciding fifth set in its last two victories, while La Salle needed a fourth to scrape past gritty San Sebastian last Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Lady Stags and Far Eastern clash in a no-bearing game at 3 p.m.

SPORTSWATCH

N. Ecija, Tanauan batters blast rivals

TALAVERA, Nueva Ecija—First baseman Marvin Malig scored a two-run homerun in the third inning as defending champion Nueva Ecija outslugged Makati City, 6-2, to keep its unbeaten slate in the 3rd All High School baseball championship at the Talavera National High School field here. Kenneth Sinuto hit a triple to open the second inning before Malig put the defending titleholder Nueva Ecija ahead to stay. The Novo Ecijanos scored three more runs in the fifth inning to the delight of the hometown crowd, led by Talavera Mayor Neri Santos. Nueva Ecija needs one more win to barge into the crossover semifinals. In the other diamond, Ralph Cabrera, Bernard Gomez and Banjo Lucido hit a homerun each right in the first inning to power heavily favored Tanauan to an abbreviated 21-0 demolition of Albay, 21-0. The Batangueños peppered Albay hurler Charles Rances with,18 hits. In other games, Marikina downed Tuguegarao, 12-9, without getting a single hit.

CKSC, 3 others lead BP Cup tourney

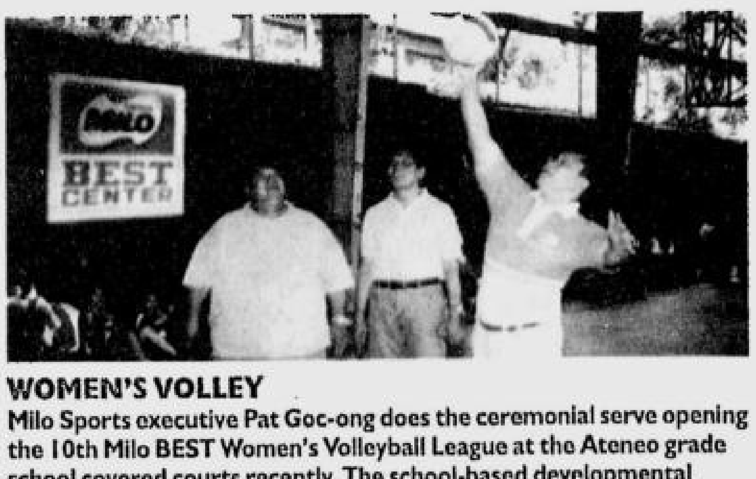
CHIANG Kai Shek College (CKSC) notched its second win by subduing Philippine Jin Nan Institute in a low scoring, defensive match, 32-13, Sunday in the 2nd Baden Powell Cup Inter-School Scout Basketball Tournament. In other games, Sakya Academy dealt Grace Christian High School its second defeat, 81-45, while Hope Christian High School started its title defense by topping St. Stephen's High School, 80-64. Games shift to high gear on Saturday as CKSC meets Sakya, Philadelphia School plays host to Hope Christian High School, and Grace Christian battles Jin Nan. These games will determine the top qualifiers which will enjoy the twice-to-beat advantage in the semifinals.

Filway-Time Life chess raises prize pot

PRIZE purses in the first Filway-Time Life Open chess tournament has been increased to make the event more competitive. Filway Marketing Inc. CEO and president Hector "Chito" O. Tagaysay said the champion in the Open division will now take home P30,000, instead of the original P15,000. The second placer will receive P15,000, third placer P10,000, fourth P5,000, fifth P3,000, sixth P2,000 and seventh to 10th P1,000 each. Competitions will also be held in the non-master, women's, senior, junior, unrated, and kiddies divisions. Among the early entries in the two-day tournament slated Feb. 12 and 13 at the Trade Hall of Starmall Shopping Complex in Mandaluyong City are grandmasters Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr., and Nelson Mariano II and GM-elect Mark Paragua. *Marlon Bernardino*

Santiago lifts fifth World Slasher Cup

REGARDED as the cockers' cocker in the local circuit, sportsman Jun Santiago did not disappoint his throng of followers by clinching the prestigious 2005 World Slasher Cup 8-Cock Derby Saturday night at the Araneta Coliseum. Santiago shared the honors with his American partner Joseph Wolcott, the 2004 Sunset Game Club Cocker of the Year. Former pilot Boy Marzo emerged as co-champion. So tough was the competition that Santiago's Joe Firefly Thunderbird 12 and Marzo's BM Bulalayaw RBI could only score 6.5 points out of a possible eight. With only 3.5 points going into the 4-cock finals, Joe Firefly Thunderbird 12's quest dimmed after losing a fight. But with the front-runners falling one after the other, Santiago's imported dark red roundheads made their move, routing Jimafer JVLet PBRJ, CPB Farm Binangonan and BM Bulalayaw RB to win. The victory made Santiago the winningest World Slasher Cup entry with five titles, besting Big Dome owner Jorge "Nene" Araneta, Esting Teopaco and former Rep. Jose "Peping" Cojuangco who have four each. Meanwhile, the next NCA 7-Cock Derby unfolds on Feb. 1 and 3 at the Big Dome, with Pol Estrellado and Boy Royo as hosts. The NCA has lined up 15 national and two international derbies to support its various socio and civic projects as well as provide scholarship to deserving students.



WOMEN'S VOLLEY
Milo Sports executive Pat Goc-ong does the ceremonial serve opening the 10th Milo BEST Women's Volleyball League at the Ateneo grade school covered courts recently. The school-based developmental meet drew a record total 37 teams in the developmental and competitive levels. With Goc-ong are BEST Center founder Nic Jorge (left) and former PBA player Jimmy Noblezada.

Choosing the right exercise

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I RECEIVED many calls in reaction to my two recent pieces about Michael Jordan's formula of success. All reacted positively. Meaning, they agreed with Tim Grover, who devised Jordan's NBA fitness program.

I am a bit surprised that many of the callers were not really athletes in the strictest sense of the word. Many were executives and businessmen, who said Grover has become their idol in that they have started embracing his program. Thus, to continue with Grover's highly successful fitness regimen, here's more. Again, this was told to Bob Condor of Playboy.

But before we proceed, who said Playboy is purely a for men-only magazine? It was in Playboy that I have read the best articles ever written about Marlon Brando, Marilyn Monroe and John Lennon, to name but three of the world celebrities who graced the pages of the internationally acclaimed magazine.

So, here's Grover's genius again.

CHANGE OF PACE: One of Grover's secrets is interval training. Devote one workout each week to short-track work, doing those wind sprints you hated back in high school. Also sprint through your weight routine—while maintaining perfect form—for tremendous results in performance.

The key lies in pushing yourself far enough to exhaust muscles while maintaining correct technique. Rest long enough between exercises to stay in form, but continue to challenge yourself.

SMART THINKING #2: "Nobody works out for three hours," says Grover. "There's usually a lot of socializing involved." Rather than waste the time, exercise intelligently. Forget the small talk and dedicate your time to moving. Don't wait for a machine, use another one. See how far you can go on a bike in ten minutes, then hop on a rower for another ten. Grover suggests half an hour in the cardio room. Use three different machines at matching intensity and don't take a break. If the weight room is packed, do some floor work, abdominal crunches, push-ups, simple-leg hops, jumping jacks, pull-ups or chin-ups.

SURPRISE YOURSELF: Muscles are highly proficient at adapting to physical demands. That's why many fitness enthusiasts hit a plateau in cardiovascular conditioning or strength.

Grover says to keep your body guessing. Change your routine every month. If you usually run first, and then lift weights, switch it around. Do lower-body work first, then the upper body. Change hand positions on your lifts. Try a new exercise class. Play a different sport.

Rather than ride the same bike at the health club, use another model. Better yet, try another piece of equipment. Use the random setting frequently, because that adds an element of physiological surprise.

***

Haven't you noticed? Grover hates monotony. So, he advises us not to do the same thing over and over again. The trick is, to try new things. That's why some say walking gets to be a bore if you do it all the time at the same time. So, thrice a week in the morning, walk. Thrice a week in the afternoon, walk. Once a week maybe, depending on your age and physical condition (consult your doctor always, of course), jog instead of walk. Or bike. Jump. Skip rope. Shadow box.

I jog, walk, do the garden, cultivate the plants, taste a new recipe at my favorite restaurant, bike, do many other things, whatever suits me. Even bird watching is fine with me; I have a pair of birdbaths right in my backyard. It's fun watching the *maria capras* and the *tarats* and, at times, the *perrocas* make their daily dip and then shake their feathers while perched on a branch of our grafted *macopa*. I also play golf and, when the time allows it, lift weights—any kind of weight. But mostly now, I lift my weights at night, if you know what I mean. Bottom line is, for an exercise to last, it shouldn't be a bore or it will die a natural death. Thus, adopt at least three exercises and juggle them during the week. Even sitting is an exercise, remember?

I did this piece sitting down.

RTU noses out La Salle-Dasma; EAC wins

GAMES TODAY (*Pasay Sports Complex*)
9 a.m.—St. Francis vs CDSL
10:30 a.m.—RTU vs Arellano

RIZAL Technological University, with three players combining for 71 points, surprised La Salle-Dasmariñas, 98-95, Sunday in the 12th National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball quarterfinals at the Pasay Sports Complex.

Jun Mellejor led the Technocrats with 28 points, Ian Bencito banged in 23 and Bogs Magbanua hit 20 as RTU, which used only six players, notched their second win in four matches to keep their semifinal hopes alive.

Magbanua and Bencito hit three freethrows with 4.2 seconds left as the Technocrats knocked the Patriots out of their share of the lead with the Emilio Aguinaldo College Generals.

The Generals improved to 4-1 after posting an 82-78 triumph over Polytechnic University.

Clamping down on the Patriots' shooters in the last two minutes allowed the Technocrats to overcome a 95-96 deficit.

The Flaming Arrows share second place at 3-1 with the Colegio de San Lorenzo Griffins.

The scores:

RTU 98—Mellejor 28, Bencito 23, Magbanua 20, Tadena 13, Bower 10, Navarro 4.

LA SALLE-DASMARIÑAS 95—Nacpil 16, Canlas 12, Sabado 12, Macalma 11, Bagulo 10, Porto 9, Junatas 9, Patambang 6, Hasanon 6, Lasin 3, Moncayo 2.

Halftime: 52-24

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Ateneo golfers hold fort after 36 holes

TAGAYTAY—Vendric Tan helped Ateneo hold ground with a 35-point effort as the Loyola-based shotmakers remained way ahead after the penultimate round Saturday of the 4th Samsung Interscholastics golf championships at the Tagaytay Midlands Golf and Country Club here.

Tan joined hands with Don Padilla, who bounced back with 25 after failing to count on the first day, and Kevin Lachica (24) for 84 points as Ateneo led with a 36-hole total of 165.

Ateneo enjoyed a 20-point lead over archrival La Salle, which made 83 for the day behind Oliver Gan's 32 and William Hong's 30 for 145.

The Loyola-based golfers, getting 23 each from Claudine Chan and Riva Galvez-Tan, showed up Miriam, 46-40, in the combined college-high school division and pulled away by a hefty margin in boys' elementary.

Ateneo was also poised for two more victories as Katrina Gonzalez, Claudine Chan, Riva Galvez-Tan and Olivia Santico led Miriam College by 15 shots in the combined girls' college-high school play, 93-78.

Ateneo's Marcel Puyat, Moshe Baldo, Bino dela Paz, Carlo Legaspi and RJ Banzon also posted a huge margin in the boys' grade school.

The Ateneo boys had a 143 total against the 55 of Colegio San Agustin going into the final round of the tournament.

Justine Tambunting and Miko Alejandro—La Salle-Zobel's 1-2 punch—scored 35 and 33, respectively, and ushered their team to a 15-point spread in boys' high school play. DLSZ was at 163 while LSGH had 148.

In the individual competitions, Tan tied Aaron Dimabuyu of Global City Innovative at 59 in boys' college action; Tambunting was up by five over Miko Yee of LSGH, 65-60, in boys' high school while Puyat nursed a one-point lead over Wolen Superal of Golden Acres, 55-54.

In girls' play, Crystal Superal of Las Piñas High tallied 31-58 to go five-up over Debbie de Villa in the college-high school category, and Beverly Mendoza of St. Paul-Pasig led Paulina Sotto of Poveda by one, 51-50.

Remo Fueg of European International, JP del Claro and world champion JR Gonzales had similar 70-point totals in the boys' special division. De Claro scored 42, Gonzales 36 and Fueg 34.

Kiamco heads Filipino romp

KIAMKO pockets the equivalent of P500,000.

WARREN Kiamco led a Filipino invasion in the 2005 All-Kansai Japan 9-Ball Open in Tokyo over the weekend.

The Cebuano ace bested Dennis Orcollo in the finals to claim the top purse of about P500,000. Orcollo won the equivalent of P200,000.

Earlier, Kiamco and Orcollo trounced countrymen Ramil Gallego and Antonio Lining, respectively, in the semifinals.

Kiamco's wife, Sol, said her husband's victory was very welcome as they need the money for the ongoing construction of their new house in Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City.

For reaching the final four, Gallego and Lining received P150,000 each.

Former snooker champion Marlon Manalo said the results of the event once again underscored the Filipinos' superiority in the sport.

"Once again, Warren, Dennis, Bebeng (Gallego) and Nickoy (Lining) brought honor to the country," said Manalo.

Manalo recalled that in the 2004 World 8-Ball Championships in Fujarah, United Arab Emirates, last September, Filipinos pulled off a similar 1-2-3-4 finish with Efren "Bata" Reyes emerging as champion.

He himself placed second, Alex Pagulayan was third and Francisco "Django" Bustamante fourth. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

San Miguel Corp. adopts RP five

From page A19

under scrutiny."

Alaska team manager Joaqui Trillo heads the group tasked to find ways to maximize the RP team budget.

The board also approved Eala's marketing plan to offset the budgetary requirements of the RP team while giving the go-signal to Reyes and assistant coach Aboy Castro on their South Korea and China scouting trip.

Other proposals which the board readily approved were the creation of a PBA Hall of Fame and the grand reunion of all retired and active PBA players when the league holds its 30th anniversary on April 9.

Observers were not surprised by SMC's support for the national five considering that its head, Danding Cojuangco, served as project director for basketball in the '80s.

It was under Cojuangco's patronage that the RP team last won the ABC in 1986, a feat the PBA wants to duplicate through its major stars this year and in 2007 for the nationals to return to the Olympics in 2008.

Hontiveros keeps tenpin bowling post

HONTIVEROS (third from left) with (from left) Santos, Dychunco and Penado.

WELL-KNOWN sports figure Steve Hontiveros of Pasig Bowling Association has been re-elected president of the Philippine Bowling Congress for the next four years.

Also elected during the PBC convention held last Saturday at the Green Valley Country Club in Pasig City were Jaime Dychunco of MTBA, executive vice president; Danny Santos of PBAP, secretary general; and Nilo Penado of TCBA; treasurer.

Hontiveros is secretary general of the Philippine Olympic Committee and World FIQ president.

The presidents of PBC's 27-member associations automatically become members of the board.

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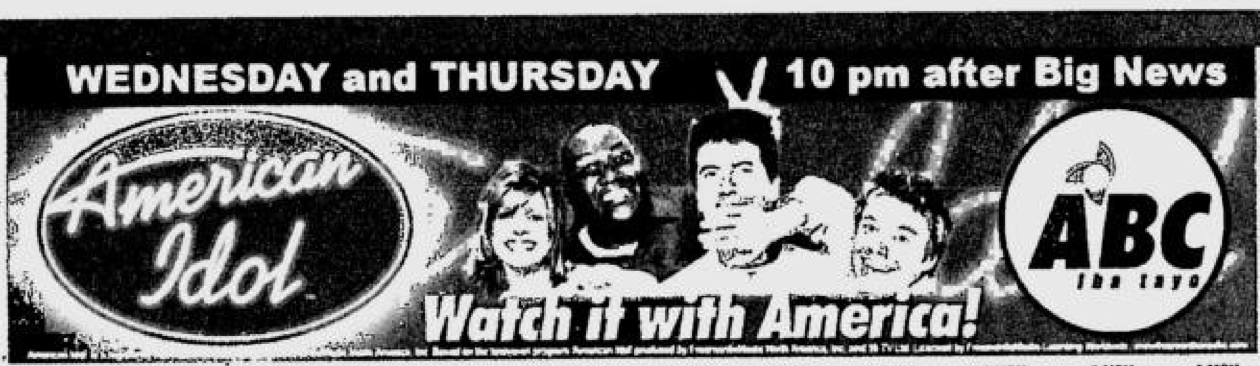
WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY 10 pm after Big News
American Idol
Watch it with America!
ABC iba tayo

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE
tuesday, January 25, 2005

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2				Showbiz No. 1	Sandara's Romance	Get Backers	Ragnarok	Masked Rider Ryuki	TV Patrol	Spirits	Krystala	Lovers In Paris	Hiram	Star Circle Nat'l Teen Quest	Bida Si Mister Bida Si Misis			Insider	Pipol
NBN		Taiwan Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		MMDA On The Road		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		TBA				Auto Focus	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	KNN	Anime Ring Kasho				Sentro	Lizzie Mcguire	Three Blind Dates		Wow Mali		Big News	The Probe Team Documentaries		Race Hour	Billboard On-Air
GMA 7	Leya (2:45 PM)	Joyride (3:15 PM)	Snow Angel (3:45 PM)		One Piece	Witch Hunter Robin	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin	Starstruck (8:45 PM)	Forever In My Heart (9:15 PM)		Bahay Mo Ba 'To?			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	8 Simple Rules	Ripley's Believe It or Not		Crossing Jordan		John Doe		Newswatch Now	Tuesday Night Trial		
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Retro TV		V League				Travel	IBC News Tonite	Up Close And Personal	
Solar		Wwe Raw				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxximal	Dungeons And Dragons	Stargate SG1		Soldier Of Fortune		RHD/LA		The Wire		Oz	
Nickelodeon	Dora, The Explorer	Little Bear	Blues Clues	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix		100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd				Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Meet My Folks		The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	Will & Grace	Knock First	One Tree Hill		The O.C.		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Blind Date	Fifth Wheel
Cinema One		Hostage				Hanggang Saan Hanggang Kailan				Kuya				Gawa Na Ang Bala Para Sa Akin				Vital Parts	
Studio 23	Bewitched	Survivor: Thailand	MYX Backtrax					X-Men Evolution	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Wazzup Wazzup	Fightbox	The Amazing Race 6		Smallville		News Central	The Oprah Winfrey Show		The Man's Room
AXN		The Amazing Race		Maximum Exposure		Fear Factor		Samurai X	Samurai X	Beastmaster		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Alias		The Amazing Race		WRC 2005: Monte Carlo	
Star World	Becker	The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Road Trip/ Charmed		The Apprentice/ Wild Card		Manhunt: The Search For America's Most Gorgeous Male Model		Friends	Road Trip
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News		World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic	On Assignment	Thrill Seeker		The Sea Hunters		Lost Subs		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wild		About Asia		Nat Geographic Specials/Built For The Kill		Thrill Seeker		The Sea Hunters	
Solar Sports		Swiss Intl. Cup 2004						KOTV Classics		Copenhagen Masters MD Final			NBA TV Daily	NBA Game Detroit @ Minnesota					NBA Action
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert	It's Good To Be	A Second Look		Look For Less	Style Star	Road & Track	Back To Basics	Clean House	
HBO			K-9: P.I. (3:45 PM)				The Ride (5:20 PM)			Undercover Brother			Thir13en Ghosts			Six Feet Under 30: Nobody Sleeps		Matchstick Men (10:50PM)	
Star Movies	Callas Forever (2:45 PM)				Two Bits			Visitors			Lord Of Flies			Hart's War				Vampire's Kiss (11:05PM)	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Police Academy	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Teen Titans	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Gundam Seed	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Codename: Kids Next Door	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	Boomerang - Boomeraction	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN		English Premier League Highlights 2004/05		World Pool Masters '04 Ann Zee, Holland		2004 Women's Trick Shot Magic CT USA		2004 World Summit of Pool NY, NY USA		World Pool Masters '04 Ann Zee, Holland		Sportscenter Taiwan	Pool/Snooker Mosconi Cup '04		High School Basketball '04 Jordan Classic				Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Lizzie Mcguire	Even Stevens	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	The Legend Of Tarzan	Lilo & Stitch/Un-talkative Bunny	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	According To Jim	America's Funniest Home Video	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax	Quicksand			I'll Be Seeing You			Innocent Moves (6:45 PM)				Thrill Seekers			The One			Hercules And The Amazon Women		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Frankenstein				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Agency II		Just Cause		Frankenstein			Chang (10:35PM)		Agency II (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Civilizations				Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Rides		Human Discovery		Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Science Mysteries	
MTV Philippines		MTV Live2 Bill Present: Fabolous, Clipse, & Pharell		Non-Stop Hits		Non-Stop Hits		MTV Get Spotted	MTV Loveline	MTV Lokal		MTV Upgraded	Non-Stop Hits	TRL		Punk'D	Wildboyz	VH1 Hits/ Video Collection	
Sports Plus	Watson's Champions Chall. Day1								Inside the PGA	Monster Jam		Freestyle Motorcross		Slipstream		Pac 10 Arizona @ Oregon			
EWTN	Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Mysteries Of The Rosary	My Little Angels	Angel Force	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Fr. Groeschel	Catholic Morality & The Catechism	EWTN Gallery	The Journey Home		Does The Church Still Teach That	Lord, Have Mercy	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	We Are One Body	Web Of Faith	

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Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
TUWING HUWEBES pagkatapos ng American Idol
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Tiger roars back, tops Buick Open

WOODS reacts after a birdie putt on the 8th hole en route to his victory. AFP

LA JOLLA, California—Tiger Woods rallied with a four-under par 68 in Sunday's final round to capture the $4.5 million PGA Buick Invitational and collect his first win of 2005.

It was also Woods' first stroke-play triumph in over a year.

"That was a great win," Woods said. "It is a nice way to start out the year.

"It was a tough battle, but I hung in there the best I could. This week my putter really came around." The 29-year-old American beat runner-ups Tom Lehman, Charles Howell and Britain's Luke Donald by three strokes in winning his third career Buick Invitational title.

Germany's Bernhard Langer finished fourth at 11-under and South African Ernie Els was among five golfers six shots off the pace.

World No. 1 Vijay Singh, who won last week's Sony Open, finished tied for 24th with a five-under 283.

Woods overtook Lehman on the 17th hole to pick up $810,000 in first-place prize money.

In an event delayed several times due to fog, Woods began the final round two shots behind co-leaders Lehman and Donald.

He won here two years ago but had not won a stroke play event since the American Express Championship in October 2003.

Woods, who is still fine-tuning his swing that he began working on last season, finished second in putts per green (1.592) and fourth in driving distance (307.6 yards).

"I think that Tom probably outplayed me today," Woods said. "He hit it wonderful all day. It just came down basically to surviving and making a couple of putts, and I happened to make a couple of bombs on him and hung around." Lehman, whose last victory came at the 2000 Phoenix Open, stayed close by hitting 10 consecutive fairways.

But his approach shot on No. 17 came up short and landed in the bunker. After his sand save hit the pin and bounced 40 feet past, his par putt was a foot short.

"I'm disappointed," Lehman said. "I can't help it. I really felt it was a great chance for me.

"I don't get many chances to play in the final group with Tiger Woods, and for 30 holes today I held my own and really liked my chances."

Woods hit his approach shot within 20 feet and tapped in for par after he ran his birdie attempt a few feet past the cup.

He birdied the 18th for a four-round total of 16-under 272, securing his 41st career PGA Tour win and third here.

"Luke made a couple of mistakes ahead of us and it came down to Tom and me," Woods said.

"Tom made that one crucial mistake there on 17, which hurt his chances. It basically came down to, for me, I wasn't hitting it all that great, but I was just trying to survive with my short game."

In 2004, Woods' only tour win came in the World Match Play Championship.

He relinquished his five-year stranglehold on the No. 1 ranking in September before winning a stroke-play event in Japan and finished second in the Tour Championship.

Lehman missed a short par putt on 18 to finish tied for third with Donald and Howell at 13-under 275. He carded a one-over 73.

The 27-year-old Donald, who had one career tour win, held a two-stroke lead over Woods and Lehman through 12 holes before succumbing to the pressure.

He double-bogeyed the 14th hole and Woods and Lehman, playing right behind him, both tapped in for birdie on the 13th. *AFP*

Roddick makes final 8; Russian aces lose steam

MELBOURNE, Australia—Andy Roddick overcame some frustrating lapses before advancing to the Australian Open quarterfinals with a 6-3, 7-6 (8), 6-1 win Monday over German qualifier Philipp Kohlschreiber.

Top-ranked Lindsay Davenport breezed into the women's quarterfinals without any major problems, but third-seeded Anastasia Myskina, the French Open champion, and fellow Russian Elena Dementieva, the losing finalist at the French and US Opens, were eliminated.

Davenport needed just an hour to beat No. 13 Karolina Sprem, 6-2, 6-2. Sprem held serve only once in each set, while Davenport converted six of her 10 breakpoint opportunities.

Roddick lost just three points on his serve in the first set, but was more erratic in the second, doubling his number of unforced errors to 12 and throwing his racket to the court after sending a forehand long.

After taking the tiebreaker on consecutive errors by the 102nd-ranked Kohlschreiber, Roddick dominated the third set, breaking the German twice.

"I don't think I hit the ball as clean as I did in the first three matches," Roddick said. "I just felt like I was fighting it a little bit more.

"I'm not too concerned. The good thing is I don't feel like I had my best day and we're sitting here talking about a three-set win."

Roddick next faces Russia's Nikolay Davydenko, who defeated Guillermo Canas of Argentina, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3.

The two remaining Argentinians in the men's draw, No. 6 Guillermo Coria and No. 9 David Nalbandian, go head-to-head later Monday.

At times, Roddick lacked intensity against the lowest-ranked man remaining in the draw, relying on his big serve for motivation. He served 15 aces, many just when games were looking stale.

Roddick might have been conserving energy for the quarterfinals. In 2003, he beat Morocco's Younes El Aynaoui 21-19 in the fifth set of a five-hour marathon. It was the longest fifth set, in games, in men's singles at a Grand Slam tournament.

Myskina sprayed forehands wide and long, and finished with 45 unforced errors, losing 6-4, 6-2 to 19th-seeded Nathalie Dechy.

She was so concerned about her faltering forehand in the second set that she ran around to hit a double-fisted backhand on a net approach to get one break of serve back.

She shanked a forehand to give Dechy match point and dumped another into the net to finish it.

"I couldn't focus during the match, I lost a lot of easy balls," Myskina said.

Dementieva led 12th-seeded Patty Schnyder by a set and two breaks before losing, 6-7 (6), 7-6 (4), 6-2.

Dementieva had 61 of the 116 unforced errors in her match. She saved a match point with a convincing forehand winner but then gave Schnyder another with a double fault and lost the match when she dumped a forehand into the net.

"I had such bad luck—I was 4-0, 30-love and didn't take my chances. That changed the match," she said. "She started to play well, I just lost my rhythm, thought 'it's already over'—I don't know how I did it." *AP*

GUILLERMO Canas returns the ball through his legs to Nikolay Davydenko, who won the match. REUTERS

Somebody has to beat Federer, says Agassi

MELBOURNE, Australia—Ageless tennis wonder Andre Agassi has a ready-made reply to those playing down his chances against overwhelming Australian Open favorite Roger Federer in Tuesday's blockbuster quarterfinal.

The Las Vegas hustler is coming up against world number one Federer on a 25-match unbeaten roll and the loser of his last four encounters with the Swiss maestro.

Agassi, who's seen it all in men's tennis, says: "He's been playing the best tennis in the world for a while now. I mean, somebody has to beat him sooner or later, right? I hope it's Tuesday night."

Such is the peerless stature of 23-year-old Federer's game that he is considered the one to beat in every Grand Slam, and 34-year-old Agassi is relishing the prospect of testing himself.

"I'm excited. I mean, this is what I prepare for, to play the best in the biggest of situations. It's why I do this," Agassi said.

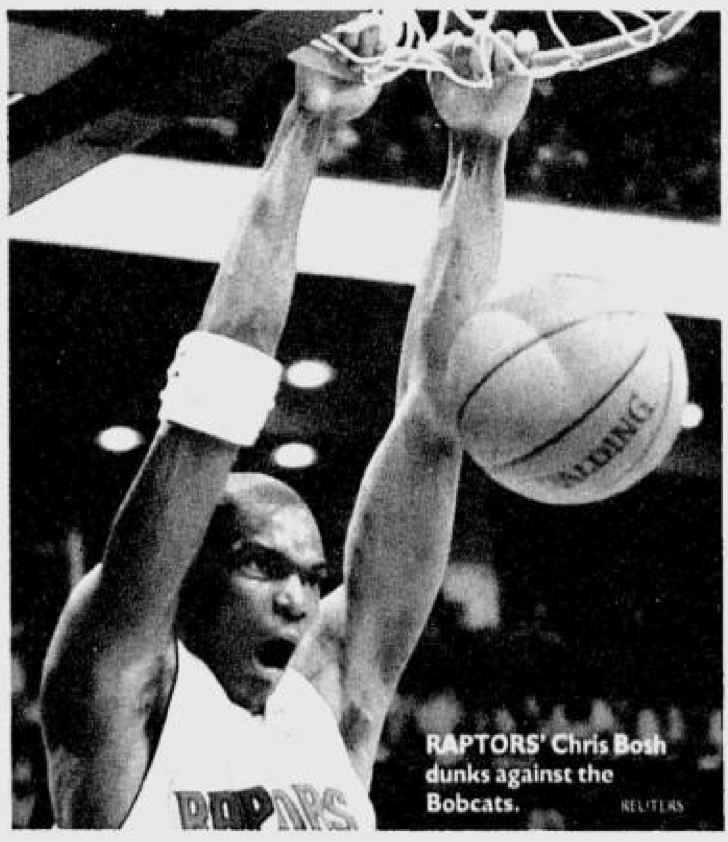
"Roger offers me the opportunity to push myself more than I've been pushed in a long time. That's a great feeling." Agassi is in the tennis pantheon. The winner of eight Grand Slams and only one of five men to have won all the Grand Slams on all surfaces and a four-time winner of the Australian Open inside 10 years.

In his 20th year on the ATP men's tour, Agassi has for some years been written off as a spent force, yet he looked like his old self in overcoming Swede Joachim Johansson's 51 aces and 96 winners to conjure a four-set win through sheer experience and cunning in the fourth round Sunday.

No doubt Agassi faces a supreme test, but he's relishing the opportunity to test himself against the contemporary best player in men's tennis.

"I mean, it's what makes sports so great. You got to show up and you got to tee 'em up and find a way to get it done again," Agassi said. *AFP*

Nowitzki powers Mavs past Nuggets



RAPTORS' Chris Bosh dunks against the Bobcats. REUTERS

DALLAS—Dirk Nowitzki scored nine of his 35 points in the final 5 minutes—including a three-point play with 17.9 seconds—to lift the Dallas Mavericks past the Denver Nuggets, 95-93, on Sunday.

The start of Nowitzki's late rally gave the Mavericks a five-point lead, but the Nuggets tied it at 91 on a 3-pointer by Earl Boykins with 1:03 left. A dunk by Kenyon Martin gave the Nuggets the lead with 27.5 seconds left.

In between, Nowitzki appeared to have put Dallas back ahead with a layup but was called for charging into Denver's Francisco Elson, who was forced into action after starting center Marcus Camby sprained his left ankle in the first quarter. Nowitzki went back at Elson after Martin's basket, hitting the tying layup and getting the foul call.

Martin, who grew up in Dallas, led Denver with 19 points and 11 rebounds. Andre Miller had 16 points and 10 assists and Carmelo Anthony, who missed the previous game with a sprained right ankle, had 14 points and five rebounds in 37 minutes.

Elson had 10 points and seven rebounds and Boykins had 11 points and six assists.

In Toronto, Jalen Rose scored 14 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter as the Toronto Raptors beat the Charlotte Bobcats.

Rose had 12 points during Toronto's pivotal 19-4 run in the fourth quarter. The Raptors outscored the Bobcats, 26-12, in the final period.

Morris Peterson added 26 points and Chris Bosh had 21 for the Raptors, who have won five straight at home.

Primoz Brezec had 19 points and tied a career-high with 12 rebounds for the Bobcats, who have lost eight straight.

Rose has played better since being removed from the Raptors' starting lineup 15 games ago. The disgruntled forward, who is rumored to be on the trading block, went 8-of-15 from the field.

Eric Williams, Toronto's new starting small forward, went 1-of-6 from the field for just two points.

In New York, Desmond Mason scored 22 points to lead six Milwaukee players in double figures, and the Bucks held off the free-falling Knicks, spoiling the debut of New York coach Herb Williams in a matchup of two of the Eastern Conference's worst teams. *AP*

COMPLETE RESULTS: Toronto 103, Charlotte 92; Dallas 95, Denver 93; Milwaukee 101, New York 96; Miami 97, New Orleans 68; Phoenix 113, New Jersey 105; San Antonio 103, Sacramento 73; Seattle 122, Utah 105.

Super Bowl pits Eagles vs Patriots

PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania—Tom Brady passed for a pair of scores as the New England Patriots earned their third trip to the Super Bowl in four years with a 41-27 victory over Pittsburgh in the AFC championship game on Sunday.

The defending champion Patriots (16-2) will play the Philadelphia Eagles (15-3) in Super Bowl 39 at Jacksonville, Florida, on Feb. 6 and have been installed as a 6 1/2-point favorite.

In the other Sunday National Football League semifinal, Philadelphia advanced to the Super Bowl for the first time in 24 years and ended a streak of three straight semifinal losses with a 27-10 victory over the Atlanta Falcons.

Patriots coach Bill Belichick improved his postseason record to 9-1, tying Vince Lombardi for the best career playoff winning percentage all-time with a minimum of 10 games.

"It's not about me and what I'm accomplishing," Brady said. "A lot of guys have their hands in this. We have a lot of clutch players. A lot of guys who play well in pressurized situations." A two-time Super Bowl Most Valuable Player, Brady improved to 8-0 in the playoffs, completing 14-of-21 passes for 207 yards.

Bart Starr is the only quarterback to win more consecutive postseason games with nine for the Green Bay Packers.

Pittsburgh rookie quarterback Ben Roethlisberger was intercepted three times, one of which was returned 87 yards for a touchdown by safety Rodney Harrison.

"I just made too many mistakes today. Made some bad reads," he said.

Roethlisberger, the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year, entered with a 14-0 record for Pittsburgh (16-2), but could not overcome a poor first half. *AFP*

Lennox denies he wants rich Vitali rematch

LEWIS

LONDON—Former world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis denied a published report that said he'll end his retirement to fight Vitali Klitschko in November.

The London tabloid the Sunday Mirror quoted Lewis as saying, "I'm making a comeback later this year. The money is up to 21 million pounds ($39.3 million) right now and I simply can't turn that much cash down.

"I need the money just like everyone else and it's just too good to turn down."

But later Sunday, Lewis released a statement saying he was not making a comeback.

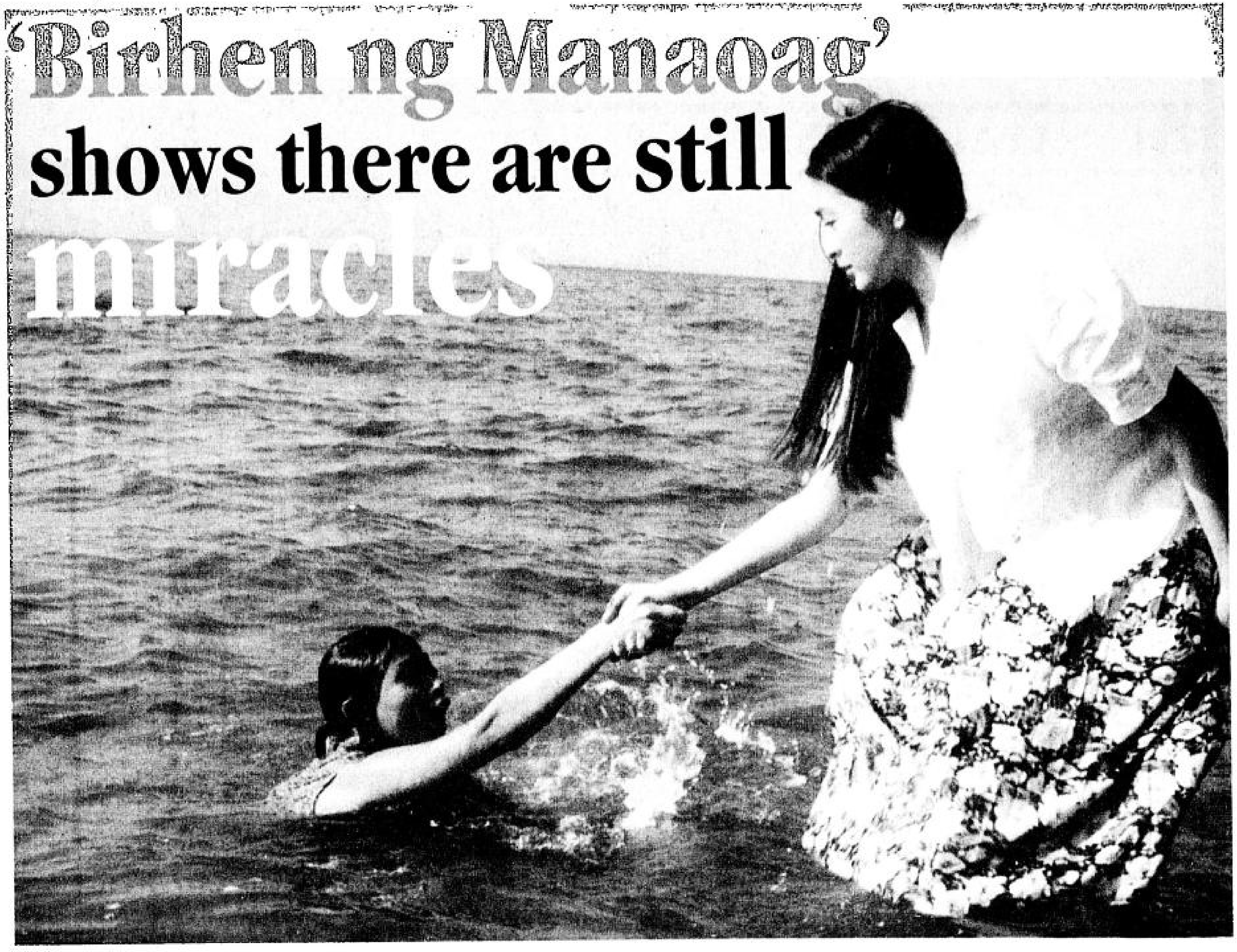
"I want to reiterate what I said when I retired in February 2004 that I was fortunate to leave the sport on my own terms and that I will be one of the few heavyweight champions in history to retire on top and stay retired," he said.

Lewis, 39, retired Feb. 6 with a 41-2-1 record. Klitschko assumed the title April 24 when he beat Corrie Sanders.

Lewis and Klitschko last fought in June 2003. Lewis was behind on points when the fight was stopped in the sixth round because Klitschko was cut.

That was Lewis' last fight and he was booed out of the ring after a poor performance. The WBC mandated a rematch, but Lewis retired instead. *AP*

'Birhen ng Manaoag' shows there are still miracles



A MIRACLE happens as a "stranger" saves a young woman from drowning.

THE ACTUAL Manaoag shrine in Pangasinan plays a vital role in the new movie.

By Glenn E. Marcelo
Contributor

THE FAME of the town of Manaoag in Pangasinan province north of Manila as a pilgrim's destination continues to spread among devotees of the Nuestra Senora de Manaoag (Our Lady of Manaoag), and also among the merely curious. At any given time of the year, they flock to the shrine either to perform indulgences, invoke pious petitions, pray or merely gawk.

The public will soon find itself absorbed by the story of Our Lady of the Manaoag—in a new Cine Suerte movie called "Birhen ng Manaoag, May Milagro Ba?," directed by Ben M7 Yalung.

Yalung also directed "Ama Namin," "Divine Mercy" and "Kristo" in the same genre. In "Birhen Manaog," he explores.

"I believe films touch people's lives the same way faith moves the spirit to overcome what needs to be overcome," says Yalung about how his personal beliefs as a filmmaker.

MATTHEW Hunt is Christ on the Cross

"As a filmmaker, cinema is my tool. If I can lead people to the light through the things I do and believe in, nothing could be more worthwhile."

The surge of interest in the Manaoag apparitions years ago came in the wake of successive tragedies (the MV Doña Paz and MV Don Juan sea mishaps); disasters natural and man-made (the 1990 earthquake; the Mt. Pinatubo eruptions; the Ormoc flash flood; along with many other woes that have always beleaguered the country.

"The concept of miracles has never changed," says Yalung. "It is we who have changed. Perhaps there are no modern-day miracles because we fail to discern them when they unfold in our daily lives. We have become too much challenged by logic and, in the process, have lost a large amount of faith.

"Modern-day miracles do happen," says Yalung, "depending upon how one views everyday events. Or how much one is willing to be guided by faith. The coming of a brand-new day to some can be considered a miracle of hope. To many still, every breath one takes is a miracle in itself. How life unfolds and makes one a more enlightened person can also be a miracle.

"There are many things we may take for granted most of the time, but if we give them much thought, these little things can be miracles unfolding. This is what we always hope to share with everybody through the film."

In "Birhen ng Manaoag," these themes occur and recur as tales of emotional anguish, untimely death, and desperation intersect with each other.

"Birhen ng Manaoag, May Milagro Ba?" gathers an illustrious array of actors—Eddie Garcia, Albert Martinez, Joyce Jimenez, Cherry Pie Picache, Ella Guevarra, together with Jodi Santamaria and Marco Alcaraz.

It introduces Bianca King and Ina Feleo as the Virgin Mary, with Matthew Hunt as Jesus Christ. It features the special participation of Alicia Alonzo.

Yalung directs from a Christian R. Vallez screenplay.

JOYCE in a scene of pain inside the shrine

EDDIE Garcia (with director Yalung) plays a Manaoag priest.

JODI Santamaria

Beautiful, wealthy—and wise

From page A25

turn-off. **Pia Guanio** and **Paolo Bediones** are often reduced to doing voice-over spiels, while serious interviews are assigned to **Joey Marquez**, who is better off as a sitcom mainstay rather than as a host or interviewer.

Snoop Dogg

SNOOP Dogg's signature rap style shines through in his latest album, "R&G: The Masterpiece. Each track has a unique treatment.

The album is highlighted by the Neptune's contributions, from the catchy, minimalist "Drop It Like It's Hot," all the way to the '80s retro-funk jam—"Let's Go Down."

Also helping out are **Justin Timberlake, Nelly, Charlie Wilson, Lil' John** and **50 Cent**.

THOMAS Haden Church and Paul Giamatti in "Sideways"

Snoop Dogg's career as an actor has been taking off. In movies he's acted in "Soul Plane," "Huggy Bear," and "Old School." On TV, he was featured in his own comedy/variety show, MTV's "Doggy Fizzle Televizzle."

'Sideways'

THE ROAD trip romp "Sideways" stars **Paul Giamatti** as a would-be novelist who gifts his old college buddy, played by **Thomas Haden Church**, with a trip to a vineyard before his wedding. They're friends, but the only thing that they seem to have in common at this period in their lives is the same heady mix of failed ambitions and fading youth.

Effective? You bet. "Sideways" recently bagged the Golden Globes' awards for best musical or comedy, and best screenplay. Catch it when it opens in town.

'Something fishy on Star Circle Quest'

From page A24

day night's 'Star Circle Quest Fab 5 Elimination Special' on Channel 2. I believe something 'fishy' happened.

"Facts: Janelle was voted out of the competition. No 'farewell VTR' for Janelle. No live interview on 'The Buzz' last Sunday, unlike those contestants eliminated before her. Insiders say members of the SCQ staff—and even Questors previously eliminated—were shocked to hear Janelle being voted out, because she's really 'in'!

"I do believe the jurors failed to perform their jobs well when they eliminated Janelle. They degraded the Star of Legaspi and disrespected Bicolanos.

"Perhaps they had not prepared the customary farewell tribute for Janelle because she wasn't really supposed to bid farewell? They were certain that she would be in the Magic 5 ... but outside intervention apparently changed the tide.

"It was disheartening for us fans because she is really talented. It was obvious from the start, however, that the jurors didn't like her, so that no matter how well she performed, she was bound to get a very low evaluation.

"In the Variety Show Exercises, for instance, she was commended by mentors **Christian Bautista** and **Iya** as the strongest questor. Still, the jurors ranked her second to the bottom in the final assessment.

"Now I have reason not to watch any more ABS-CBN shows. Next time, please have a Jurors' Fave Questor instead of 'Star Circle Quest.' Obviously, the jurors run the whole show, anyway. *Enard of Makati*

For feedback, e-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

'The End' zooms in on 66-year-old . . .

From page A26

ROMERO

"This measure benefits seven theaters [including cinemas owned by SM City Baguio], when it's better for the old ones to upgrade so they can compete against the malls," she explained.

Alonzo said provincial cinemas are hopeful about recovery, now that the challenge of censorship by mall management, dwindling local box-office sales, and film piracy have again made independent theaters important to the movie business. Producers are testing the fiscal viability of a revitalized provincial theater chain through the nationalized MMFF, he said.

An era ends

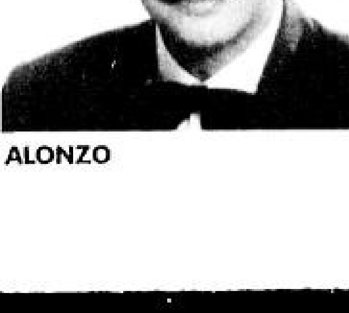
"Some of the oldest movie theaters in the Philippines have already shut down," Alonzo lamented. This effectively ends an era in local cinema, he pointed out, since "movie houses in town centers used to be a cornerstone of family entertainment."

Fely Manzano, Pines Theater manager, said the cinema's current owners no longer feel a connection with the community, and have given up sustaining their historic asset.

Manzano noted: "This theater was bombed [by American planes liberating Baguio from the Japanese]. It was running a movie [at the time]. Pines survived that war, but it didn't survive the malls."

Pines lost regular customers first to theaters in two shopping malls in 2000, and then to those inside another mall in 2003.

"Independent theaters can hardly compete because the malls can run big-draw movies simultaneously. We can book only one film at a time."



ALONZO

'Something fishy on Star Circle Quest'

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

I'VE ALWAYS said **Monsour del Rosario** is one of our few honest-to-goodness action stars because he has the proper training. The best part is, he's not like most action stars who try to act very macho all the time, bossing everybody around.

If you want to see real screen action, catch Mon's movie with Ronnie Ricketts, "Uno." I had a tete-a-tete with Mon about the movie. Lights!Camera! Action!

What makes "Uno" different from your previous films?

It is the first time Ronnie Ricketts and I teamed up for a full length picture together. Also, this movie has action, comedy and dramatic highlights. I co-produced this very entertaining film.

What does it take to be a real action star?

A lot of discipline, sacrifice and perseverance.

You have to stay fit and strong so you look convincing to your audience.

You must learn how to fight. It is a big plus to actually be a real fighter so your punches, kicks, form and balance project the real thing. You should hold and shoot a gun properly as well.

Actors are "salesmen of emotions." You should study your role diligently and work at being in character.

How did Ronnie and you support each other in the film?

We discussed at length how the story should be told, and how the fight scenes should be executed. We stayed open to ideas that would make the film better and more entertaining.

The title being "Uno," in what way would you consider yourself to be number 1?

I do not consider myself number 1. I do my best and believe that God will do the rest.

Guess list

GUESS which female TV host has become a nuisance to the staff of her show because her mother is such a prima donna. ("*Talo pa ang anak*) "Worse than the daughter," as one of her co-hosts puts it.

The stage mom doesn't let her daughter mingle with the show's production staff, and even with the other stars. She also bans everyone from entering the dressing room while her daughter is being primped up or waiting for her take. No wonder the daughter was earlier booted out of a top-rating TV show.

Mothers like this one should not get a "repeat performance." As we say in show biz, "*I*—pack up *na 'yang lola mo*!"

Guess which young comedian already has a kid with his live-in partner but refuses to admit it. Is it because he believes being a dad reduces his market value? Hopefully, the kid would not suffer the same fate as the comedian's first-born (with another woman) whom he does not bother to check on at all.

Guess which two TV hosts were caught smooching during their break? Nope, we don't mean show biz *beso-beso*. Wonder how the male host escaped his possessive girlfriend's watchful eye. Or is he in for a shocker soon?

Readers' corner

"HI! Dolly!

"I'd just like to comment on last Fri-

'SOMETHING/ A23

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NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

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1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 (DTS) RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 (DTS) SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 (DOLBY) BLADE TRINITY
3 (DTS) OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 SEED OF CHUCKY
3 (DOLBY) OCEAN'S TWELVE

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) WHITE NOISE
2 UNO
3 (DTS) ONE MISSED CALL
4 GALING GALING MO BABES
5 BLADE TRINITY

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 MANO PO
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 (DTS) BLADE TRINITY
4 (DOLBY) SEED OF CHUCKY

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 BUKAS MAY UMAGA
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 SECRETARY
4 HAROLD & KUMAR

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 LASTIKMAN
2 WHITE NOISE
3 (DOLBY) DARKNESS
4 (DTS) 2046

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) WHITE NOISE
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 (DTS ES) OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 AFTER THE SUNSET

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 HAPPY SIGAW
2 BLADE TRINITY
3 (DOLBY) WHITE NOISE
4 (DTS) AFTER THE SUNSET

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 HELLWOLF
3 (DOLBY) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 (DTS) OCEAN'S TWELVE

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 RAISE YOUR VOISE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 7953320
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 AISHITE IMASU 1941
3 (DOLBY) OCEAN'S TWELVE

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2 THE SIN
3 SALAT SA LIGAYA
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
5 BLADE TRINITY

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 BUKAS MAY UMAGA
3 MAY
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332
1 BIRTH
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 SAPLOT
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
5 KUNG FU HUSTLE

ANGELES (045) 892-2348
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2 WHITE NOISE
3 HONEY
4 AFTER THE SUNSET

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188
1 RAISE YOUR VOICE
2 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
3 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE
5 MAD HOUSE
6 BLADE TRINITY

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270
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2 SAPLOT
3 BAD SANTA
4 WHITE NOISE
5 BLADE TRINITY
6 KUNG FU HUSTLE

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
4 OUT OF REACH
5 THE SIN
6 HELLWOLF

ILOILO (033) 336-8070
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4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
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THX 1 MEET THE FOCKERS	1 WHITE NOISE	1 WHITE NOISE	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 MEET THE FOCKERS 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30	1 WHITE NOISE
2 OCEAN'S 12	2 MADHOUSE	2 MEET THE FOCKERS	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 KUNG FU HUSTLE 12:50, 2:55	2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 MEET THE FOCKERS	3 MEET THE FOCKERS	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 MEET THE FOCKERS [illegible]	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 OCEAN'S 12 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	3 NED KELLY
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE	4 BLADE: TRINITY	GUARANTEED SEATS 4 MEET THE FOCKERS 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20	4 OCEAN'S 12
5 WHITE NOISE		5 KUNG FU HUSTLE	GUARANTEED SEATS 5 WHITE NOISE 2:35, 4:45, 6:55, 9:05, 11:15	5
		6 RAISE YOUR VOICE		
		7 OCEAN'S 12		

GB1 GREENBELT 1
1 WHITE NOISE 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30
2 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40

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GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
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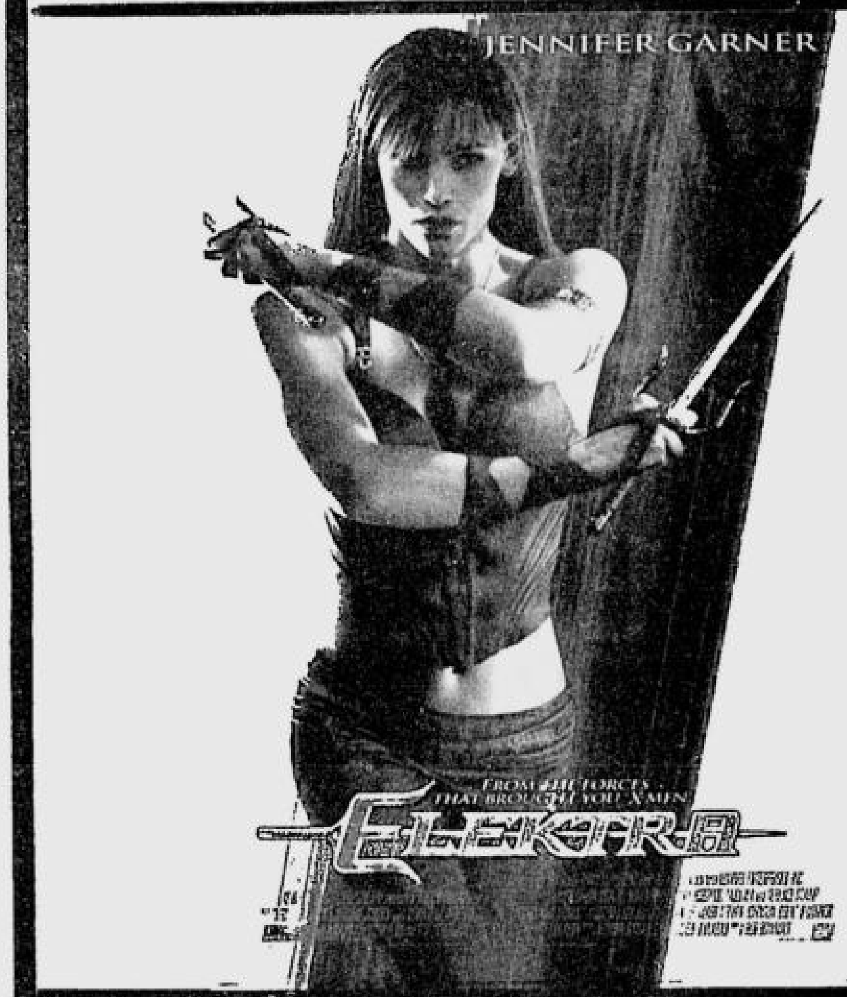

JENNIFER GARNER
FROM THE FORCES THAT BROUGHT YOU X-MEN
ELEKTRA

OPENS TOMORROW AT AYALA CINEMAS
AYALA CINEMAS
MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance13 (PG-13)

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Beautiful, wealthy—and wise

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

CELEBRITIES are expected to be beautiful and wealthy, and aren't supposed to be very wise. There are some happy exceptions to the rule, however, and we can learn a lot from their insights and musings:

Oprah Winfrey: I never think about what I want. It's about what you want to give other people.

Barbara Hutton: The more money you have, the less satisfaction you get!

Simone Signoret: Fashion is what you think you should be. Style is what you are—if you *are* someone.

Lenore Coffee: When a man of 40 falls in love with a girl of 20, it isn't her youth he's seeking, but his own.

Helena Rubenstein: There are no ugly women, only lazy ones!

Delta Burke: If you want to say it with flowers, remember that a single rose screams, "I'm cheap!"

Agatha Christie: Where large sums of money are concerned, it is advisable to trust nobody.

Madonna: Money makes you beautiful.

Eva Gabor: My mother always told me never to accept candy from strange men. Get real estate instead!

Magda Gabor: Our mother used to tell us, "She who marries for money earns it—the hard way." She believed you should fall for a rich man first—*then* marry him!

Loretta Young: If you want a place in the sun, you have to expect a few blisters.

Lisa Kirk: A gossip is someone who talks to you about others, a bore is one who talks to you about himself, and a brilliant conversationalist talks to you about yourself.

Bill Clinton: Politics is for people who are too ugly to get into show business.

Shirley Temple: I stopped believing in Santa Claus at an early age. Mother took me to see him in a department store, and he asked me for my autograph!

Feedback

FROM **Loi Landicho** of Makati City: "Among the three longest-running show biz-oriented talk shows on local television, I find GMA 7's "Startalk" the most likable and least offensive in terms of news treatment and presentation.

"It manages to create legitimate stories out of mediocre issues, and the mundane somehow becomes profound with its cerebral take on the subject. Its writers never fail to amaze me.

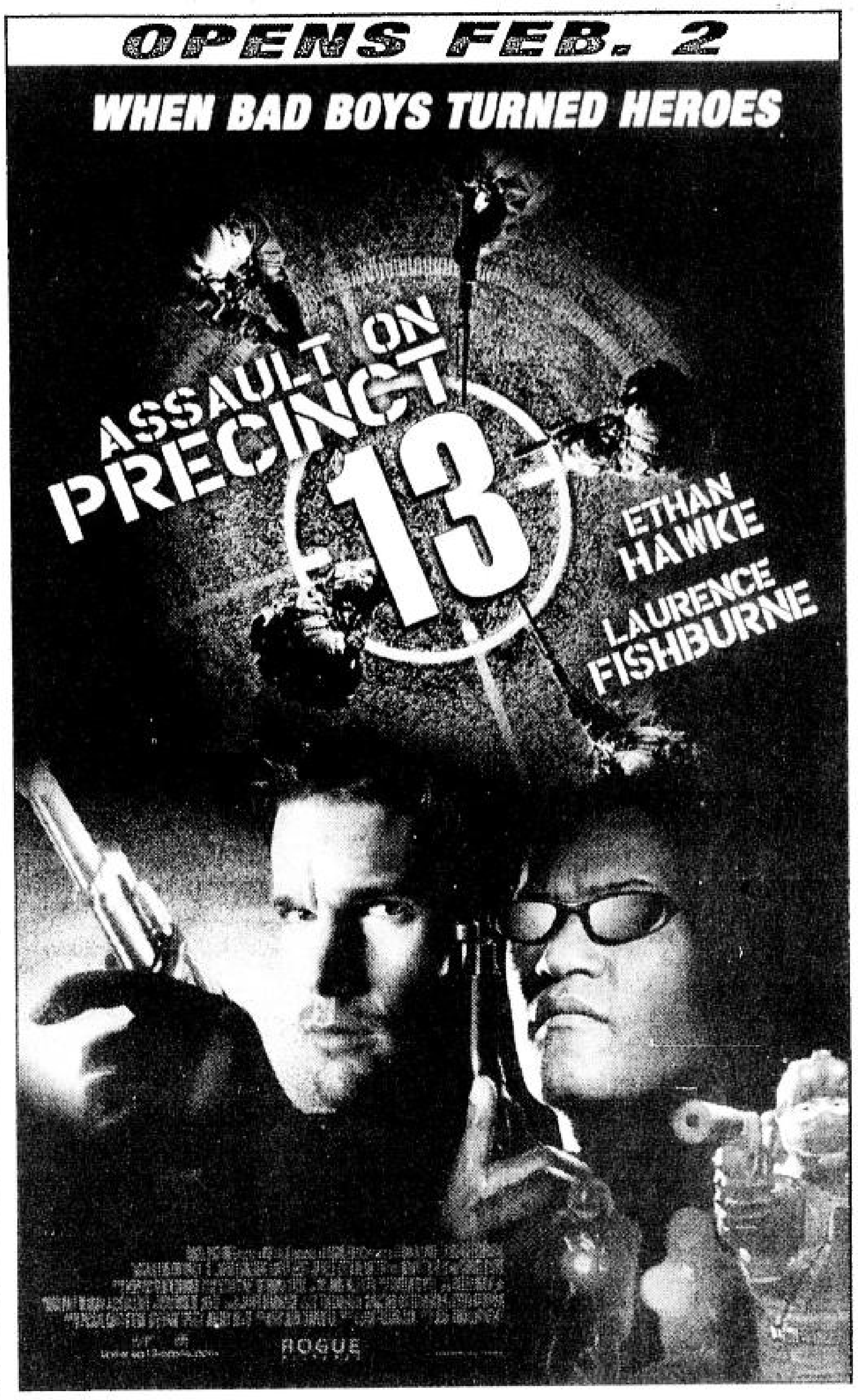
"While 'The Buzz' banks on more creative segments, its attempts to glorify anything and anybody *kapamilya* is apparent in its spiels, and whenever hosts **Cristy Fermin** and **Kris Aquino** see the opportunity to do so. They are consistent in taking potshots against the rival station.

"Aquino and Fermin should learn a thing or two from **Boy Abunda**, who embodies intrepidity. He knows when to open his mouth or not, and when he does, he always commands respect.

"'S-Files' leads the ratings game among the three shows, but this doesn't necessarily equate to superiority. In fact, I find the show the least entertaining of the three. **Richard Gomez**'s acerbity is a

BEAUTIFUL/ A23

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13
JENNIFER GARNER
BORN TO FIGHT.
TRAINED TO KILL.
ELEKTRA
MARVEL
FROM THE FORCES THAT BROUGHT YOU "X-MEN"
OPENS TOMORROW


OPENS FEB. 2
WHEN BAD BOYS TURNED HEROES
ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
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WHO LET THE ZEBRA OUT?
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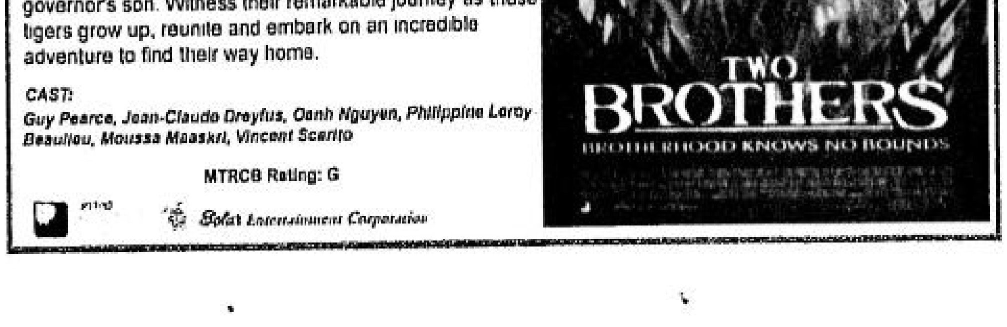
David SPADE
Jeff FOXWORTHY
Snoop DOGG
Steve HARVEY
Frankie MUNIZ
RACING STRIPES

ENROLLMENT STARTS SOON!
MTRCB RATING R-13
School for Seduction
One is not born a woman,
one becomes one
KELLY BROOK · EMILY WOOF · DERVLA KIRWAN · MARGI CLARKE
JESSICA JOHNSON · NEIL STUKE AND TIM HEALY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From Jean-Jacques Annaud, the highly acclaimed director of The Bear, comes a heartwarming story about the power of friendship and the bond between brothers.

SYNOPSIS:
Two mischievous twin tiger cubs live a carefree life in an exotic jungle amidst beautiful ancient ruins. But one day, an act of fate forces them apart, as one is sold off to the circus and the other becomes the pampered pet of a governor's son. Witness their remarkable journey as these tigers grow up, reunite and embark on an incredible adventure to find their way home.

CAST:
Guy Pearce, Jean-Claude Dreyfus, Oanh Nguyen, Philippine Leroy Beaulieu, Moussa Maaskri, Vincent Scarito

MTRCB Rating: G

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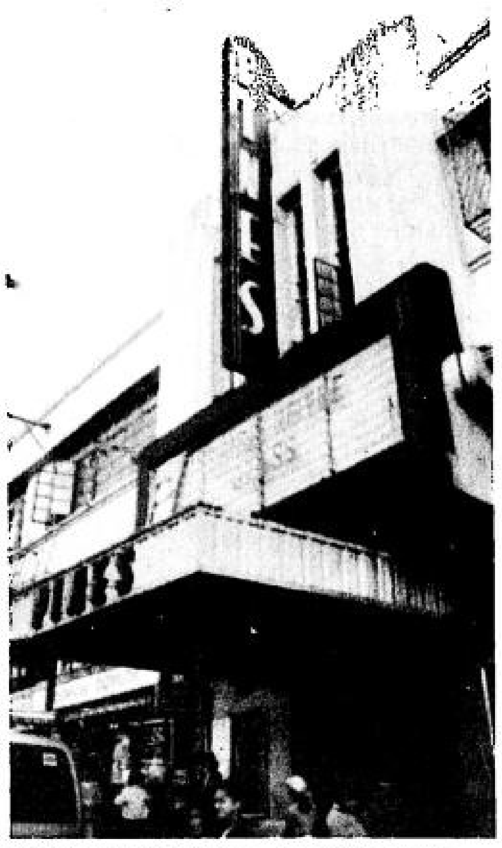
Editor Louie C. Camino
Assistant Editor Emmie G. Velarde

'The End' zooms in on Baguio's 66-year-old Pines movie house

'The theater survived the war, but it didn't survive the malls'



ON THE BLOCK. Pines, one of the oldest theaters in the country, was showing a movie when American bombers came to liberate the city from the Japanese.

EV ESPIRITU

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SHOW STOPPER

BAGUIO CITY—If there is one film industry trend that should scare Philippine movie stu dios today, it's the slow and systematic destruction of the traditional distribution network.

In this city, one of the country's oldest movie theaters has been put on the auction block.

Cinemas run by a chain of shopping malls have made obsolete independent provincial movie houses, like the 64-year-old Pines Theater.

But all hope is not lost. The city government has cut box-office taxes from 30 to 15 percent, giving old movie houses a new lease on life.

Pines Theater opened in 1938, the first movie house to operate in the summer capital almost 30 years after the city was inaugurated by the American colonial government.

It's contemporary, the 60-year-old Session Theater has been renovated to house a restaurant and several shops, leaving only three independent theaters operating here.

On Monday, the city council approved on second reading a measure that reduced its 30-year-old amusement tax, citing lessons learned from the recent Metro Manila Film Festival.

Dramatic support

Actor Ramon "Chinggoy" Alonzo, MMFF Baguio coordinator, earlier said the Philippine movie industry had pushed for a national festival scope to help rescue filmmakers. Television and home video entertainment have virtually displaced the cinema from Filipino lifestyles, he told local officials in November last year.

Vice Mayor Peter Ray Bautista, one of the tax cut proponents, told Alonzo and National Artist for Film Eddie Romero recently that the city's support for the movie industry "will be dramatic."

Thelma Manaois, city treasurer, said the pending ordinance means Baguio is sacrificing half of its P14-million annual box-office take. It isn't a good gamble, she said.

THE END/ A23

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BLADE TRINITY
MARVEL
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LUZON

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1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 WHITE NOISE
3 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 UNO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE

sm city marilao
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city baguio
1 BLADE TRINITY
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 FORGOTTEN
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE

sm city bacoor
1 RAISE YOUR VOICE
2 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
3 MAD HOUSE
4 OCEAN'S TWELVE
5 BLADE TRINITY
6 KUNG FU HUSTLE
7 UNO
8 NATIONAL TREASURE

sm city batangas
1 HONEY
2 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 HELLWOLF

sm city dasmariñas
1 KUNG FU HUSTLE
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE
4 UNO

sm city lucena
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
3 AFTER THE SUNSET
4 SKY CAPTAIN

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
4 WHITE NOISE
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
6 NED KELLY
7 DARKNESS
8 BLADE TRINITY

sm city iloilo
1 HAROLD AND KUMAR
2 RESERVED
3 HELLWOLF
4 OUT OF REACH
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE
6 BLADE TRINITY
7 RESERVED
8 SO HAPPY TOGETHER

sm city davao
1 KUNG FU HUSLTE
2 NANDIAK
3 GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
4 BLADE TRINITY
5 DARKNESS
6 OCEAN'S TWELVE

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2 DARKNESS
3 WIMBLEDON
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

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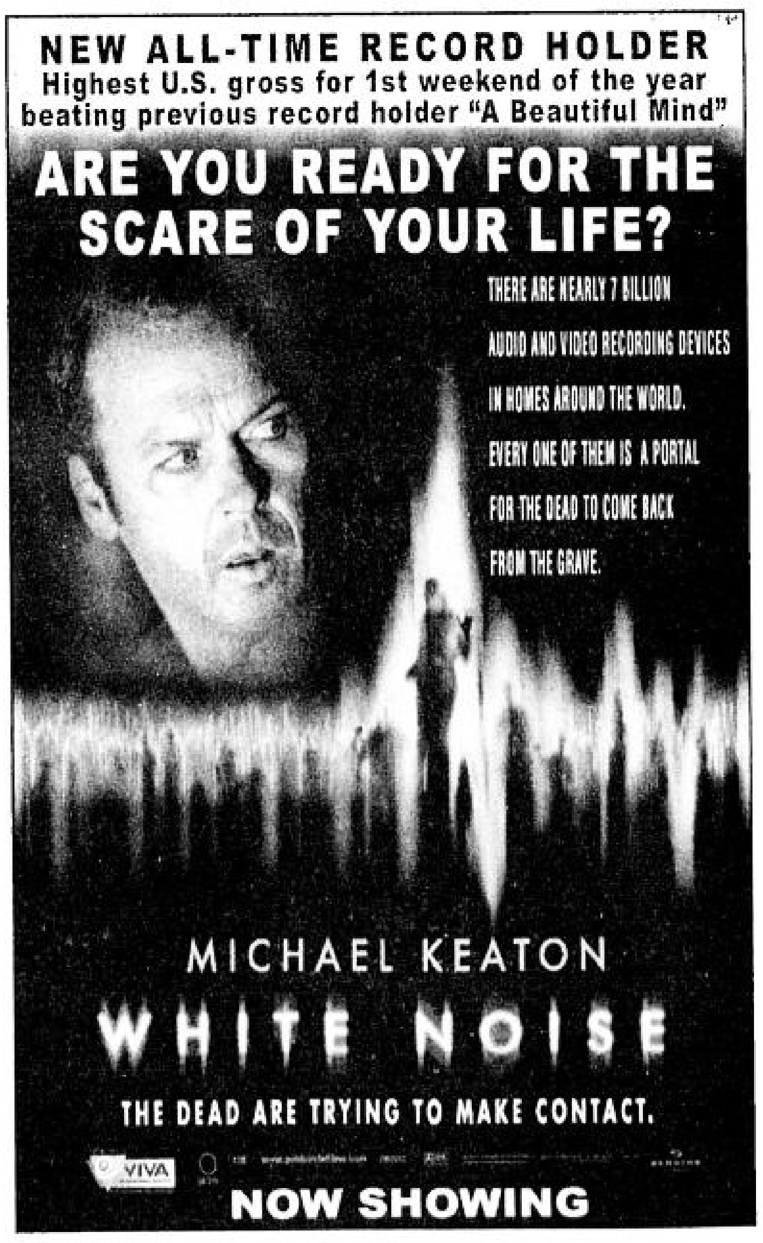

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WHITE NOISE
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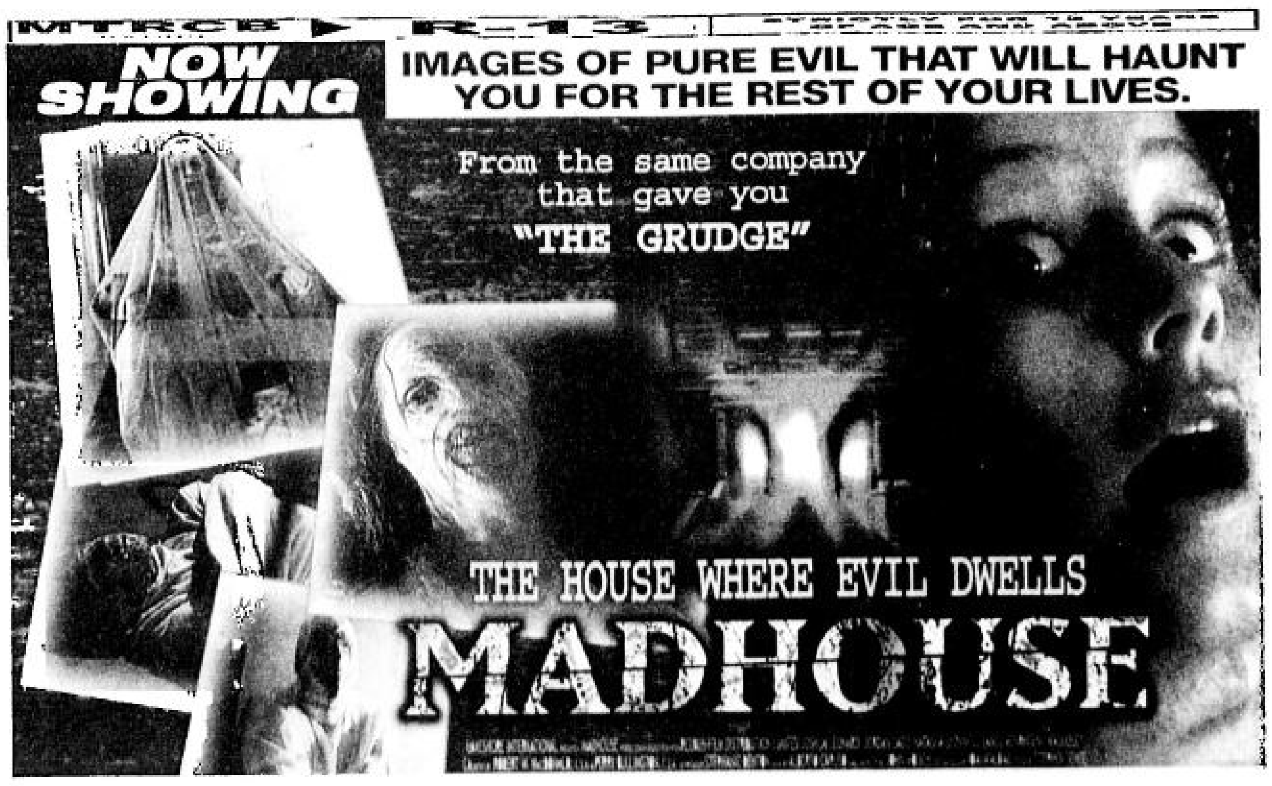

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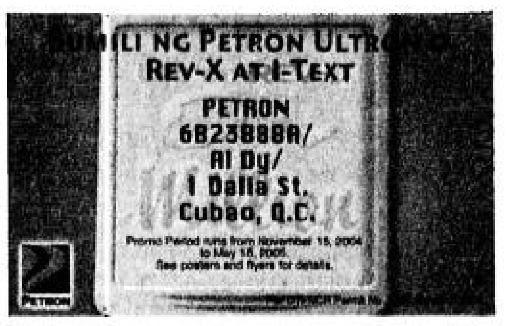
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Peso rallies to 55.40:$1 as stocks surge

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO yesterday climbed to a year-high of 55.40 against the US dollar as the strong influx of foreign "hot" money or portfolio investments perked up the stock exchange, thus boosting the local currency.

Currency traders said the peso's sharp appreciation mirrored the jump in the Philippine Stock Exchange composite index past 2,000 for the first time in five years.

The Phisix yesterday went up by 21.47 points or 1.38 percent to 2,015.25, led by the recently invigorated mining sector which rose by 7.7 percent.

At the Philippine Dealing System, the peso opened at the intraday low of 55.50 and hit an intraday high of 55.35 before closing at 55.40 against the greenback on heavy volume of $373.5 million.

The local currency thus gained 14.5 centavos at the end of the day from Friday's closing of 55.545 to the dollar. It was its strongest finish since Jan. 13 last year.

"The driver for the peso is equity flow. Look at the volume and level of the stock market. Those are nothing you have seen in the last five years," said Rovic de Guzman, chief foreign exchange dealer at Union Bank of the Philippines.

Yesterday's stock rally extended the market's gains to fresh five-year highs above 2,000 points as investors bought into companies expected to announce strong results for 2004.

Dealers said the government's decision to lower the 2005 budget deficit target on expectations of improving revenues also boosted investor sentiment.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index's closing of 2,015.25 was the main index's best finish since Feb. 10, 2000, when it closed at 2,020.15. The broader all-shares index fell 7.68 points to 1,168.80.

Gainers beat losers 78 to 33, with 36 stocks unchanged.

Volume totalled 8.02 billion shares worth P1.98 billion from 5.29 billion shares worth P1.66 billion on Friday.

Foreign investors purchased P961.2 million and sold P574.4 million worth of shares.

"Investors are riding on the wave of recent positive economic indicators and a vibrant corporate outlook. It's just so hard to stop a train full of money," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings Inc.

"Stories surrounding the market are strong, at least for the first quarter," said PCCI Securities president Francisco Liboro.

Liboro said the market's mood is heady because investors were looking forward to a host of positive developments in the first quarter.

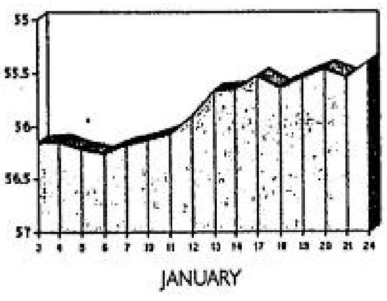
"You have the mining summit coming up in February, there are the strong corporate earnings coming out, then there's the bet-

PESO/ B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



₱ 55.40 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 24, 2005

¥ 102.79 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 24, 2005

GOLD: $ 423.50-424.00
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 19, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Lorenzos to exercise right over Del Monte stake

THE LORENZO family said it would exercise its right to match the best offer for a 40-percent stake in Del Monte Pacific Ltd. (DMPL) that Italian group Cirio wants to sell.

The Lorenzo family holds about 20 percent of fruit and juice maker Del Monte and would become the single biggest shareholder if it buys Cirio's stake.

Cirio said last week that Italy's Trade ministry had authorized it to sell the 40-percent stake to Chinese-Filipino business tycoon Lucio Tan.

Martin Lorenzo, vice chair of Del Monte Philippines, said his family was looking at increasing its stake in Del Monte.

"We will still match (the best offer). We are not selling," Lorenzo said.

Bankrupt food group Cirio said in its statement that no definitive agreement has been signed with Basic Holdings Corp. owned by Tan, one of the richest people in the Philippines and the region.

Tan holds stakes in Philippine Airlines, Asia Brewery, Fortune Tobacco, Philippine National Bank, Allied Bank and Tanduay Holdings.

"Even if (a) definitive agreement is signed, there is no certainty that a mandatory general offer for DMPL will take place," Cirio said in a statement posted in Del Monte's website.

Administrators of Cirio are looking at selling some of its assets to allow it to repay debt.

Cirio defaulted on more than 1 billion euros ($1.3 billion) of bonds in late 2002 and is being liquidated after investors rejected a restructuring plan. *Reuters*

Increased gov't fees seen raising ₱31B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL government expects to boost by about 60 percent this year its revenue collection from the higher fees and charges to be imposed by line agencies and state-owned firms.

According to documents from the Department of Finance, the government expects P30.87 billion worth of fees and charges from various government agencies. This is much bigger than the P19.37 billion collected in 2004.

The increase in the fees and charges imposed by government agencies is one of the administrative measures undertaken by the Arroyo administration to address its weak revenue-generating efforts.

Outgoing Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong earlier said the executive branch was banking on the administrative measures to raise revenue while its legislative proposals, including increases in various taxes, were taking time to be approved by Congress.

The DOF and the Department of Budget and Management earlier issued a joint circular directing government agencies and state-owned companies, especially those that have not yet raised their fees and charges in years, to implement an increase to adjust with their rising cost of operation.

HIGHER/ B3

PCPO/MALACANANG PHOTO

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo autographs the hard hat of president and CEO of Aboitiz and Co. Jon Ramon Aboitiz (C) and chair Mukoto Kambara of Tsuneishi Group of Japan. Tsuneishi Heavy Industries Inc. inaugurated a new slipway at its shipyard in Balamban, Cebu.

Petron profit jumps 11.3% to ₱3.5B

By Abigail L. Ho

PROFIT of market leader Petron Corp. jumped 11.3-percent to almost P3.5 billion in 2004 from P3.1 billion the year before, unaudited financial statements showed.

While posting year-on-year growth, the company likewise surpassed its 2004 net income target of P3.3 billion on the back of strong sales volumes and high export margins.

Overall sales volumes surged 6 percent to 52.75 million barrels in 2004 compared with 49.78 million barrels posted in 2003.

Sales to the domestic market increased by 14.4 percent, jacking up Petron's market share to 37.6 percent from 33.8 percent in 2003, maintaining its leadership position in the local market.

With world oil prices soaring, Petron's export revenue contributed more than 40 percent to its net income for the year.

"Product prices in the Asian region were at peak levels in 2004, and we aimed to capture the incremental margins, particularly through exports of mixed xylene," Petron president and chief executive Khalid Al-Faddagh said in a statement yesterday. "Our export sales bring us dollar revenues which provide us with a natural hedge against fluctuations in the local currency."

He added that the

PETRON/ B3

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- Crystal multi-reflector headlamps, with auto-off
- Front Fog lamps
- Sunroof with tilt and slide function
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- Remote keyless entry with alarm and immobilizer system
- Mazda Advance Distribution and Absorption System (MAIDAS)
- Anti-lock Brake System (ABS) with Electronic Brake-Force Distribution (EBD)
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3.0L 4X2 A/T
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- Classic Three Tone Rear combination lamps
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- MZR Engine, I-4, DOHC, 16V, SEFI
- Two Tone Urban Sport Rear combination lamps with side illumination lamps
- Leather wrapped steering wheel with steering mounted audio switches
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The mining sector—best buy

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

WITH the Supreme Court upholding the constitutionality of the Mining Act of 1995, a top level Mining roadshow was held in Beijing last week to promote cooperation in the fields of mining exploration and development between the two countries. Investment commitments totaling $1.3 billion were made. Following this, an international mining conference will be held in Manila on Feb. 2 to 4. Well ahead of this news, I told readers that they should concentrate on the mining sector and call centers. Both have risen very substantially and this week, I propose that they look at the mining sector.

Within the next six years, this sector is expected to generate $6 billion in investment involving initially 23 major mining operations. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) stated that local and foreign investors have started to form a beeline to its office. In particular, foreigners are interested because there is an estimated $800 billion worth of gold, alone, waiting to be dug out, and they are now allowed to be majority investors. In addition to gold, there is copper, silver, nickel, iron and coal. The latter is being offered by DMC, mainly to overseas investors, through a public offering of SEMIRARA.

The DENR said the 23 mining operations, with the ability to generate $3 billion in gross sales annually, would also generate excise taxes of $61.4 million and income taxes of $434 million yearly. Of course, this will not happen overnight but some projects could become viable in four years and the stock market always looks ahead to future prospects. This is why long-term investors should invest in this sector.

"These projects will contribute substantially to poverty alleviation, particularly in the countryside, and to the overall economic growth of the Philippines." The change of heart by the Supreme Court is the most important event which has taken place in this country for many years, and its effect will be far-reaching and beneficial. Also expected to become active during the period are 37 exploration projects with annual expenditure of $92.5 million, according to the director of mines and geoscience bureau.

So I picked up on the right sectors immediately, but I do not profess to be a mining analyst and recommended the three stocks in reverse order, just as they do in beauty contests. Our excellent research department has just concluded an in-depth study, which I propose to summarize. They get the credit for the following article but I get the payment.

In the 1980s the Philippines was ranked the 5th biggest producer of gold and the 9th largest producer of copper in the world. The industry contributed a large chunk of the country's GDP and 21.3 percent of total exports. Today, the Philippines is not in the top 10 gold-producing nations and has ceased to become a major player in copper. Low metal prices in the '90s, plus the difficulties brought about by the Asian crisis of 1997, were the major factors that forced many local firms to cease mining activity completely.

The rise in all commodity prices, thanks largely to the voracious appetite of China, has made mining more attractive again, but local companies do not have the capital or the technology to do it alone. Foreign companies have the resources but crave stability so a clear-cut policy with regard to incentives must be established quickly and applied on a consistent basis. Even then, rehabilitated mines are not expected to come on stream before 2007.

New sites will take much longer to become operational because they still have to go through the lengthy process of confirming their commercial viability. Multiple tests to ensure the extent and quality of reserves can take a year or so, and the actual development (which often entails transporting heavy equipment to remote areas) could last three to four years. Are current metal prices going to be sustained until then? No one knows for sure but China, which is among the biggest buyers of metallic and non-metallic minerals, continues to expand its economy at a fast pace. What follows is so technical that I have already taken three aspirins to clear my headache and I will greatly simplify it.

Philex B

On rough estimates, the stock is trading at 11.5 times earnings and twice its book value. This is well below the sector average and no other mining stock comes close to these valuations. The company has three main sites, Padcal (Benguet), Bulawan (Negros) and Boyongan (Surigao). Of these, only the first is currently operational, Bulawan having been decommissioned in 2002 due to low gold prices. At Boyongan, a major find is still being studied under a joint venture with Anglo American. The site is commercially viable but Anglo does not want to start development until 500 million tons of reserves are found. This may take another year or two and there may be only 300 million tons.

However, the property is right beside another prospective mine site owned by Manila Mining. Initial tests show promise and Anglo may get its 500 million tons of reserves, by teaming up with Manila Mining as well as Philex. But the results may not be known for another three to four years. Using a low price of $390 an ounce for gold, Philex is believed to be worth between P1.70 and P1.90. The stock is rated as a BUY with a price target of P1.80. Gold is currently $427 an ounce.

Lepanto B

Like PX, LC only has commercial operations in one area, Mangkayan in the Benguet Province. Although relatively young, the two mines probably have a combined remaining life of only eight to 10 years. Ore grades are only four grams per ton against an expected 10 grams. LC also owns 60 percent of Far Southeast Gold Resources, which is commercially viable but has yet to find a partner. The problem is that the ore is 1 km below the surface, making it technically difficult and expensive to develop. On the other hand, LC is currently in talks with Ivanhoe Mines and this may, or may not, lead to a financial and technical assistance agreement. Net income is expected to reach P250 million, meaning the shares are selling at 44 times earnings. This is expensive and even though potential reserves are higher, the shares are rated as NEUTRAL.

Manila Mining B

The mine ceased activity a long time ago. Management is excited by its Kalayaan mine adjacent to Philex in Surigao but, as already stated, its reserves will not be known for sometime. Research, therefore, ranks it as a SPECULATIVE BUY. If Anglo bids for MA, it would mean that they would enter into a joint venture with PX, so the latter would also benefit.

Atlas

This company may be the first to reopen its copper mine in Toledo (Cebu). At present, it is dormant but could restart in two years with the help of Alakor Corp. Atlas may also have nickel but there is little data to go on and Research rates it as a SPECULATIVE BUY. It is not a liquid stock.

To summarize, after an exhaustive and exhausting study, the research department picks PX or PXB as its preferred BUY.

The market has been rising steadily as foreign brokers pour money into our tiny market. The risk factor is extremely high so once stocks start to correct, take off your profit immediately.

FH has announced a one for two rights issue at P1. All stockholders must take up the new shares at P1.

While the market is so active, I will concentrate on it and forget the jokes. Next week, I will write about Semirara. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 24, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.3	3.7	3.3	3.7	240,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	29	29.5	28.5	29.5	515,100
Bank of the Phil. Islands	55	57.5	55	56.5	1,403,400
China Banking Corp.	575	575	575	575	570
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	49.5	50	49	49	110,500
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.42	0.44	0.42	0.43	5,010,000
International Exch. Bank	18	18.75	17.75	18.25	865,600
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	30	31.5	30	31	5,554,400
Philippine National Bank	24.5	30	24.5	27.5	167,100
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	26,000
Security Bank Corp.	33	33	32	32.5	910,500
Union Bank of the Phil.	26.5	28	26.5	28	163,700
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	220,000
Bankard Inc.	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	70,000
First Abacus Financial	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2400	2400	2400	2400	500
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.04	2.18	2.02	2.16	809,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	118	122	118	122	25,300
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1770	1770	1765	1765	4,100
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.75	19	18.5	18.75	97,400
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.92	1.94	1.84	1.86	23,743,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	930	955	930	950	91,190
Ipeople Inc.	4.05	4.15	4.05	4.1	142,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.038	0.037	0.037	24,800,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.36	0.41	0.36	0.41	600,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.22	2.22	50,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.85	3.95	3.8	3.9	17,235,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1450	1455	1445	1450	89,190
Ivantage Corp.	0.7	0.73	0.67	0.67	2,250,000
Philweb Corp.	0.11	0.012	0.011	0.012	65,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	17.5	18.25	17.5	18	285,700
Manila Electric Co. B	26	27.5	26	27	2,473,400
Petron Corp.	3.5	4	3.5	3.9	14,694,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	5,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.16	1.28	1.16	1.18	1,581,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.5	1.52	1.5	1.52	25,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	6.9	7.4	6.9	7.3	3,651,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	520,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	10,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.41	0.46	0.41	0.46	7,880,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3.45	4	3.45	3.8	13,828,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1	1	1	1	90,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	5,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3	3.05	3	3.05	161,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	12,800
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28.5	29	28	29	122,000
San Miguel Pure Foods A	55	55	55	55	100
RFM Corp.	0.74	0.75	0.73	0.73	450,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58	58.5	58	58.5	85,500
San Miguel Corp. B	78.5	78.5	77	77.5	22,900
Universal Robina Corp.	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	87,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	13.25	14	13.25	13.25	6,800
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.0095	0.008	0.0085	340,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0085	0.01	0.0085	0.009	127,000,000
Ayala Corp.	8.1	8.3	8.1	8.3	9,438,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.39	0.52	0.39	0.52	2,500,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.9	3.95	3.85	3.95	5,509,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	3,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.028	0.031	0.028	0.03	40,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2	2	1.98	1.98	149,000
APC Group Inc.	0.195	0.205	0.185	0.185	15,290,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	207,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	50,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	39,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	20,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	21.5	21.5	21.5	21.5	7,100
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	300,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.92	1.04	0.91	0.97	75,090,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.185	0.185	1,610,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	810,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.195	0.2	0.175	0.175	6,200,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.45	4.45	4.3	4.4	8,629,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.032	0.033	0.032	0.033	1,200,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	30,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	1,572,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	10	10	8.7	9	4,582,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	36.5	37.5	36.5	37.5	1,819,200
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	330,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	1,400,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.14	1.14	5,111,000
Ionics Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.62	1.64	336,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	21	21	21	21	24,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.25	3.3	3.25	3.25	667,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.6	2.65	2.46	2.46	2,282,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.017	0.018	0.016	0.016	6,100,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.36	1.42	1.36	1.42	18,860,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.51	0.52	0.5	0.5	54,810,000
Polar Property Holdings	3	3	3	3	36,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.04	75,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	200,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.48	0.51	0.48	0.51	540,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	70,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	30,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	50,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.14	2,520,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	10,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.235	0.25	0.235	0.25	4,270,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.7	1.78	1.7	1.7	352,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0625	0.07	0.0625	0.07	2,200,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	100,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	2,070,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.06	1.1	1.06	1.08	2,487,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.59	0.6	0.59	0.59	330,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3.1	3	3.1	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	1,610,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	8.3	8.6	8.3	8.5	18,776,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	190,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	8,950,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.16	1,220,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.4	22,910,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.34	1.36	14,915,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.19	0.2	0.185	0.185	1,280,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.65	0.66	1,890,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	10,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.095	0.095	0.09	0.09	2,200,000
Primex Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	110,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	10,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.21	1,100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.46	1.5	1.44	1.46	1,561,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.4	19,644,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.75	0.8	0.71	0.71	240,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.73	0.8	0.69	0.75	860,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.014	0.016	0.014	0.016	952,400,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.8	7.1	6.8	6.9	1,710,000
Benguet Corp. A	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.5	56,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.47	0.52	0.47	0.49	66,650,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.53	0.57	0.53	0.56	66,680,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.021	0.025	0.02	0.024	2,572,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.035	0.029	0.034	1,289,900,000
Omico Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	1,121,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.26	1.34	1.24	1.24	24,612,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.36	1.48	1.36	1.42	34,451,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.29	0.36	0.29	0.35	3,470,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	15,600,000
Interport Res.	0.005	0.006	0.005	0.006	114,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.005	0.0055	0.005	0.0055	24,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.007	325,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	122,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.31	0.32	0.3	0.3	650,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	160,000
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	30,100,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	79,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.0875	0.09	0.085	0.085	12,500,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.29	0.31	0.28	0.3	850,000

Semirara starts selling shares to investors in HK, Singapore

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SEMIRARA Mining Corp. (Semirara), the country's largest producer of coal, has kicked off its offering of shares to investors in Asia, particularly in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Sources said the company had decided to change the price range for its stock offering to P28 to P36 per share, from the original level of P22 to P44 a share.

Semirara will offer 78.6 million shares to international investors and 15.18 million shares to local investors. A roadshow was held in the United States last week and a similar activity was undertaken in Singapore yesterday. The next roadshow will be held today in Hong Kong.

"We are on our last leg. The response is overwhelming. The downgrading (of the country's sovereign rating by Standard & Poor's) has no effect (on the offering)," a source familiar with the roadshow said.

In a separate disclosure, DMCI Holdings Inc., which owns 94 percent of Semirara before the offering, said Semirara would extend the offer period for trading participants or brokers up to Jan. 28. The final offer price will be announced on Jan . 27. A total of 15.18 million shares were set aside for brokers which can be purchased in multiples of 5,000 shares.

Semirara's international offering covers 78.57 million shares.

The listing date for the shares issued during Semirara's international offer is slated on Feb 4.

Semirara expects to fund its expansion plans this year by securing $28 million in debt from suppliers and raising additional capital from the stock offerings.

The earnings from the offering will also be used to fund the retirement of debt.

Semirara plans to secure debt worth $28 million for the expansion of its plant capacity to 3.5 million metric tons from the present 2.6 million metric tons.

PSBank posts 20% growth in net profit

By Doris C. Dumlao

PHILIPPINE Savings Bank, a unit of Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., posted a 20-percent growth in net profit in 2004 from year-ago level on solid earnings from consumer banking, investments and acquired assets.

PSBank president Pascual Garcia III said yesterday: "2004 was a very good year for PSBank as we demonstrated our ability to grow our business organically by acquiring market share from other bank competitors."

He said the bank's tracking indicators showed notable improvements in our market penetration across all major product groups.

"We took the opportunity provided by the strong growth in our core business to invest P250 million in new branches and technology. This will allow us to serve new communities and be more competitive in 2005," he added.

The rise in net income reflected the expansion in the total loan portfolio by 21 percent to P24.5 billion and in deposits, which rose by P12 billion or 45 percent to P40.2 billion.

The thrift bank's total resources now stand at P46 billion, up by P12 billion or 36 percent from 2003, while total capital now amounts to P4.6 billion.

PSBank is the country's second largest thrift bank in terms of assets, next to BPI Family Bank.

Its earnings per share stood at P2.70 last year while return on equity improved to 11.4 percent from 9.8 percent in 2003.

The thrift bank said it managed to grow its balance sheet without sacrificing asset quality. Its non-performing loan ratio was contained at 6.1 percent, better than the thrift bank industry's average ratio of 11.6 percent.

Garcia said PSBank would continue expanding its branch network, and introducing new products and technology applications.

He cited the valuable support that the parent bank, Metrobank, had provided to the bank in terms of technology and infrastructure.

Last year, Metrobank purchased 18.36 million shares of PSBank from the open market, increasing its stake to 74 percent from 64 percent.

CAP set to submit land titles for asset-share swap deal

COLLEGE ASSURANCE Plan Philippines Inc. said it would file shortly with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) clean titles for the land that was offered for an asset-share swap deal with certain local property firms.

Sources said CAP filed with the SEC yesterday its application seeking clearance for 2,900 hectares of land. These pieces of property are held by the Roxas Group and the Fil-Estate Group which will subscribe to CAP shares.

The SEC general counsel earlier said the agency did not accept the property offered by Fil-Estate Properties Inc. for the asset-share swap deal since they did not have clean titles.

The Fil-Estate group said it would review the titles of its land holdings to determine which ones could be used for the deal with CAP.

Green Square Properties Inc. of the Roxas Group owns the property in Quezon that was offered for the swap, while Fil-Estate Properties owns the Cavite property.

Fil-Estate Properties , a wholly-owned subsidiary of Fil-Estate Land Inc. (Feli), earlier subscribed to P496.3 million worth of CAP shares—126,397 common shares and 4.84 million preferred shares. The amount will be paid by assigning pieces of property of Fepi in Cavite to CAP.

The SEC earlier turned down a request for additional time that officials of the property firms said they needed to determine questionable land titles and issue separate titles for the land that would be used for the swap.

In a Nov. 26 letter to Romeo Roxas, president of Green Square Properties, an SEC unit also explained that the SEC could not approve the application before the titles for the swap were ready.

Roxas, through Green Square Properties and Green Circle Properties and Resources, is proposing to subscribe to CAP shares worth P6 billion and, in return, transfer to CAP parcels of land in Baler town in the eastern province of Aurora near Dingalan Bay. But some of the titles for the property were said to be in the name of the government. Roxas then reportedly proposed to issue separate titles, free and clear of claims under the agrarian reform program. Roxas reportedly owns 30,000 hectares of land in the area.

CAP is pushing for the property-for-share swap to address its trust fund liabilities.

The SEC said in an oversight report in March last year that what has contributed to CAP's problems now was its heavy investments in the Fil-Estate Group.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CURRENCIES

January 24, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.766518473	1.000000	55.5460
Japan	Yen	0.007466	0.009740	0.5410
United Kingdom	Pound	1.440058	1.878700	104.3543
Hongkong	Dollar	0.098291	0.128231	7.1227
Switzerland	Franc	0.647015	0.844096	46.8862
Canada	Dollar	0.627933	0.819202	45.5034
Singapore	Dollar	0.469163	0.612070	33.9980
Australia	Dollar	0.588995	0.768403	42.6817
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.033258	2.652590	147.3408
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204405	0.266667	14.8123
Brunei	Dollar	0.467732	0.610203	33.8943
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000109	0.0061
Thailand	Baht	0.019889	0.025947	1.4413
UAE	Dirham	0.208724	0.272301	15.1252
Euro	Euro	1	1.304600	72.4653
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.201742	0.263193	14.6193
Korea	Won	0.000738	0.000963	0.0535
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024074	0.031407	1.7445

Fil-Hispano OKs offering

LISTED call center operator Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp. yesterday said it would raise about P300 million through a stock rights offering within the first half of the year.

Fil-Hispano chair and president Tarsicio Medalla said proceeds of the offering would be used to fund the company's entry into high-growth, non-voice business process outsourcing, and possible acquisitions.

The company is planning to sell its stocks to existing shareholders at about 90-percent discount.

The company's board yesterday approved the planned stock rights offering. Some 300 million common shares will be sold. Fil-Hispano, he said, was also considering possible regional strategic partnerships and alliances with business process outsourcing operators. *Clarissa S. Batino*

Gov't waived ₱1.9B in taxes in '04

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL government waived P1.87 billion worth of taxes and import duties last year, up slightly from P1.72 billion in 2003, according to the Department of Finance.

The amount of foregone taxes last year was based on P10.716 billion worth of imports made by sectors extended fiscal incentives under tax laws.

Of the P1.87 billion, the bulk,or P1.14 billion, was in the form of value-added tax exemptions, and P730 million in duty-free import privileges.

According to the performance report of the Mabuhay Lane, a unit of the Department of Finance tasked to process applications for duty and tax exemptions, contractors of energy-related activities got the most import incentives.

Duties and value-added taxes on imports waived in favor of contractors of various energy-related activities reached P634 million, out of P3.18 billion worth of imports.

Following contractors of energy projects were non-stock and non-profit organizations, importers of magazine and book publications, the Asian Development Bank, and qualified firms registered with the Board of Investments.

Fiscal incentives, especially those given to BOI-registered firms, are intended to attract investments into the country.

The government, however, has submitted a proposal in Congress to rationalize the country's fiscal incentives some of these have already served their purpose.

Officials said the too many incentives in the country only resulted in huge revenue losses, with no equivalent gains in productivity.

The government said forgone revenues due to the granting of fiscal incentives in 2003 alone reached over P300 billion, exceeding the government's P199.9-billion budget deficit for that year.

The proposed rationalization of fiscal incentives covers various special laws as well as several value-added tax exemptions.

The fiscal incentives rationalization plan, however, does not cover the duty and VAT exemptions granted by Tariff and Customs Code.

Petron profit jumps 11.3%

From page B1

oil firm had also become "smarter" in its marketing and business strategies, understanding the region more and taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the export market.

Petron likewise posted strong growth in its retail business, he said in an earlier interview, making this another key contributor to higher 2004 profits.

To help boost the growth of the company's retail business, he said Petron would be accelerating its plan to build 30 company-owned and company-operated service stations from five years to three years, starting in 2004.

These stations will enable Petron to take advantage of additional revenues from non-fuel businesses, including food and other consumer services.

The oil firm also expects to further boost its profit, increase its operating efficiency and cut its dollar spending with the recent commissioning of its 10,000-barrels-a-day Isomerization Unit.

This new facility will allow Petron to produce Clean Air Act-compliant gasoline here in the country.

As of now, no local oil firm can produce in-country the isomerate blend needed to make their gasoline CAA-compliant.

With this new facility, a part of the company's $100-million refinery upgrade project, Petron can not only refine its own CAA-compliant gasoline but also potentially supply the product to its competitors.

Peso rallies to 55.40:$1 . . .

From page B1

ter-than-expected GDP (gross domestic product) numbers set to be released," said Liboro.

The summit comes amid renewed favor enjoyed by the mining sector after last month's Supreme Court ruling allowing foreign investors to gain control of local mining operations. Several foreign investors have already expressed interest in taking up stakes in local mining companies.

The government is scheduled to release 2004 Gross Domestic Product data on Jan. 31. Last week, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said the country's GDP growth rate likely reached 6.1 percent, outpacing government's target of 4.9-5.8 percent. *With reports from AFP, AP*

Higher

From page B1

Examples of fees and charges are those collected by the Land Registration Authority (LRA) for land title transfers, the parking fees for airplanes collected by the Air Transportation Office, and passport fees imposed by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). The DFA, LRA, Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Customs are the biggest collectors of fees and charges.

According to a finance official, the P30.87-billion collection target for this year was raised from the original goal of P25.17 billion after the government has taken into account the additional agencies and state-owned companies that are expected to increase their fees and charges after the issuance of the circular.

The official, however, said the directive to raise fees and charges should be strictly imposed because the target of P30.87 billion might be too optimistic.

In 2004, the P19.37-billion collection was actually short of the P23.5-billion target. The 2004 collection, however, was higher than the P18.64 billion collected the previous year.

The DOF said the increase in fees and charges was not only meant to raise revenue for the cash-starved government, but also to adapt with rising operational expenses. The DOF said the last time the government implemented an increase in fees and charges was in January 2000.

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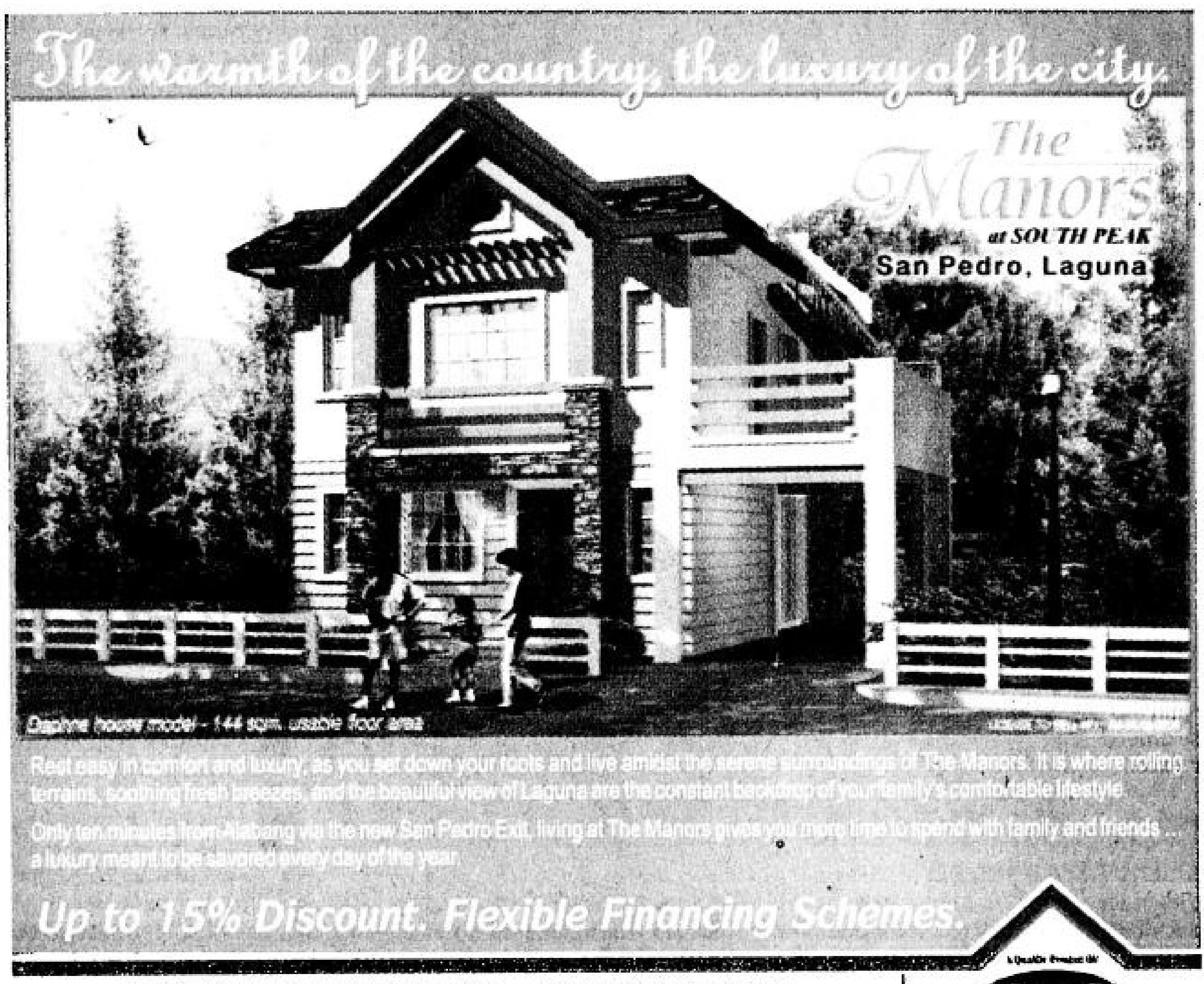
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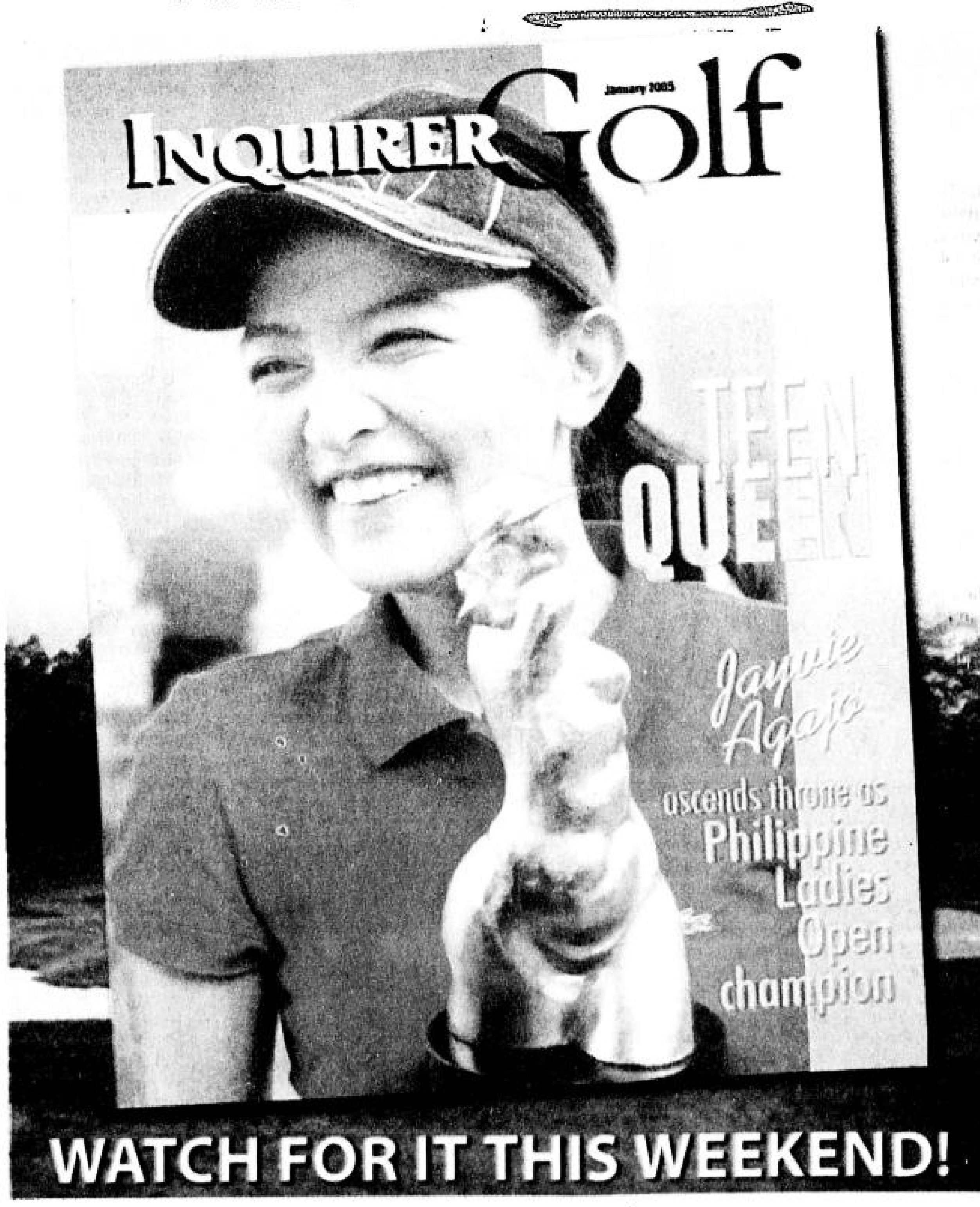
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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

ENT experts recognize Bactidol for throat and oral care

TAKING their partnership further, Pfizer Consumer Healthcare's oral antiseptic for sore throat, Hexetidine Bactidol and the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (PSO-HNS) reinforced their commitment to promote healthier throats among Filipinos.

"Since Filipinos are known to be hardworking individuals, they usually do not let anything get in the way of their work. Because of this and their neglect for oral health, they develop sore throat and other mouth problems. We are happy that through our partnership with Hexetidine Bactidol, we are also given a chance to aggressively pursue the importance of oral care and eventually make a difference in the lives of people," shares PSO-HNS president Dr. Cesar Villafuerte.

ENT experts recognize Hexetidine Bactidol for its effectiveness in giving long-lasting relief of sore throat. In photo are PSO-HNS Director Dr. Randy Canal, Category Pfizer's Oral Care head Gretchen Borja and PSO-HNS president Dr. Cesar Villafuerte, Jr. signing the Memorandum of Agreement.

Now bearing the seal of recognition from PSO-HNS, consumers are assured of Hexetidine Bactidol's therapeutic effect that even doctors and dentists trust, aside from giving long-lasting relief of sore throat.

"Having throat and mouth problems compromises performance and hampers the ability to communicate effectively. That's why we understand that people need a partner in taking care of their throats and we're proud that the ENT experts themselves recognized Hexetidine Bactidol for this purpose. Being recognized by the PSO-HNS proves that Hexetidine Bactidol's efficacy as a mouth problem and sore throat reliever is something consumers truly can rely on," Pfizer's Oral Care Category head Gretchen Borja said.

LEADERS ALL

Three of the most influential figures in the telecommunications, broadcasting and advertising industries take a breather on the sidelines of the hugely successful 3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention in Cebu City. Shown are (from left): lawyer Felipe L. Gozon, chair, president and CEO of GMA Network Inc; Manuel V. Pangilinan, chair of PLDT and Smart Communications; and Gil Chua, president and CEO of DDB Philippines. Pangilinan keynoted the closing plenary session of the convention with a call for overseas Filipinos to further deepen their commitment to support Philippine development, while Gozon hosted the closing dinner reception by announcing the launch of GMA Network's international television services dubbed GMA Pinoy TV.

BALIKBAYAN FETED

Carol Celeste Pascua (center, seated), a former media practitioner, now a successful loan officer of Washington Mutual Bank in Los Angeles, California was feted by her friends and relatives during her vacation in the Philippines. She was impressed by the development in real estate that she intends to invest in preparation for her retirement. Shown with her are (standing, from left): Pepito Olarte, Inquirer VP for advertising; Benedict Navero, Inquirer Publications; Hanneycell Navero; Linda Vergara and guest; Vincent and Ralfh Vincent Abanilla; (seated, from left) Lynne Abanilla, Bulletin AVP-classified ads and Beth Pelea.

OUTSTANDING UST ALUMNI

The UST College of Arts and Letters awarded 16 Outstanding Alumni during the Grand Alumni Homecoming to celebrate its ruby anniversary. Shown in photo are artist Jesus T. Peralta (Class '55), PR practitioner Vicente del Fierro Jr. (Class '67), educator Leticia Nietes-Buhay (Class '53), Metrobank VP for Marketing Services Ma. Jasmin Luarca-Buñag (Class '71), and educator Josephine Acosta-Pasricha (Class '64). They were awarded for moral and professional excellence in their respective fields.

RMHC PARTNERS OTHER GROUPS TO HELP TYPHOON VICTIMS

After relief donations were sent and immediate needs were met, the charity arm of fast-food giant McDonald's-Ronald McDonald's House Charities Philippines (RMHC) partnered with several other groups to help the victims of typhoons in the country to rebuild their homes, and hopefully their lives. McDonald's led by George Yang, president of local franchise holder Golden Arches Development Corp, turned over a cash donation to the Department of Social Welfare and Development and Gawad Kalinga. McDonald's involvement doesn't stop with the cash donation as it hopes to participate in this sustainable project by installing donation canisters in its stores. It will also place similar canisters in tollbooths of the Skyway for motorists who wish to give donations. Customers can also take these canisters to their homes and return it once full.

G-Cash delivers Jollibee meals at your doorstep

IT'S dinnertime and you're either stuck in rush hour traffic or caught in the office due to unfinished overtime work. Aside from the worry of not being able to prepare supper for your family in time, you are bothered by the thought of your kids going hungry while you're still out of the house. Fret no more! Globe Handyphone comes with another lifesaver, Jollibee Meal Deliveries purchased through G-Cash.

G-Cash, the new innovative service touted as your "mobile wallet", now makes it possible to have Jollibee meals delivered to your home. Having Jollibee as a partner establishment for G-Cash assures Globe subscribers in Metro Manila of Jollibee Value Meals anytime of the day. Just by texting their payment to the Jollibee representative, they can easily enjoy their favorite Langhap-Sarap meals. All the customer has to do is call 8-7000 Jollibee Delivery to place his order and provide the information needed by the Jollibee representative. He is then asked whether payment will be made in cash or through G-Cash. After being prompted to provide his Globe Handyphone number, the Jollibee representative will send an SMS confirming the G-Cash payment. The customer then confirms his payment by simply replying to the message with his MPIN, just a no-hassle one-step confirmation.

G-Cash is a service that allows Globe subscribers to send money from person to person (P2P) and purchase goods and services from partner establishments. Aside from this, it also allows Pinoys to send and receive international or domestic cash remittance simply by using their Globe Handyphones.

Keeping G-Cash handy on your Globe Handyphone surely creates wonders for those who are caught up in today's busy pace. So the next time you get caught in traffic or can't make it home in time for dinner, be sure to have your family's favorite Jollibee Value Meal delivered through the convenience of G-Cash. Note: The G-Cash - Jollibee Delivery service is available in Metro Manila only.

Bits & Clips

Fighting fire through text

ONLY last November, "Txt Fire" was born through through the effort of Gerie Chua also known as 'Mr. Ube Hopia'. He is also a communications head of the Association of Philippine Volunteer Fire Brigade Inc. Through "Txt Fire", the community will have its big share in saving other lives and properties. With the 4,500 fire brigade members, the association can handle more fire occurrences with the community support. To be a text fire volunteer, just register by typing REG space (full name) space (address) and send it to 0918-6888888. A fire volunteer can report a fire by texting REPORT space (location) and send it to 0918-6888888, then the fire station will verify the report. Aside from texting, fires can be reported at hotline 522-2222 which could handle 400 calls in on minute. As part of the text fire service, a volunteer can also receive report in a matter of 12 seconds or less on any active fire by texting FIRE and send it to 0918-6888888. Txt Fire is at service 24 hours a day.

MindShare bags Media Agency of the Year

MEDIA Magazine, the region's prestigious publication for advertising and marketing, has awarded MindShare the Media Agency of the Year accolade for the second straight year. This feat has not yet been done before by any agency. Led by regional chair John Steedman, the agency continued on its impressive new business growth record and strategic strength in what was one of the most successful years in MindShare's history. MindShare's 79 percent win rate in over last year once again confirms its reputation as a feared competition in reviews. It also held on to 95 percent of its clients from 2003. MindShare also scored highly in staff training and developing, involving all staff from CEOs to junior executives. It delivered more than 6000 training sessions, or an average of four training courses for every person in the company. MindShare's hugely successful business year, its commitment to raising industry standards, and its dedication to plan for future developments in Asia's media scene have won it Media's choice as Media Agency of the Year.

Barbizon, Mona Lisa at RDS Underwear Fair

TO COINCIDE with the month of hearts, New Barbizon Fashion Inc's intimate apparel brands Barbizon and Mona Lisa will be participating in Robinsons Department Store's month long nationwide Underwear Fair. This fair will feature unbeatable price cuts and up to 50 percent discounts on some of Barbizon and Mona Lisa's best and most popular intimate apparel items such as sandos, pantylets, hipster panties, thongs, seamless and strapless bras and many more. The sale started Jan. 16, and will end on Feb. 28, at all Robinsons Department Store branches: Galleria, Ermita, Fil Invest Alabang, Imus, Metro East, Bacolod, Cebu and all the other Robinsons Department stores near you.

Learn to make perfumes as Valentine gifts

THIS Valentine's Day, wouldn't it be nice if you could give your loved one something made by yourself? Now, you can! Just join the free Perfume-Making and Aromatherapy seminars of Chemworld Fragrance Institute. You'll learn how to make colognes and body spray, plus discover the art and science of aromatherapy through free hands-on workshop/seminars. Schedules are as follows: Jan. 22 and 29, Feb. 5 and 12 (Tuesdays, 1 to 5 p.m.); Jan. 25 and Feb. 1 to 8 (Saturdays, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.). A lecture and demonstration on how to make body sprays, colognes and perfumes will be held for free to interested participants. The workshop/seminars will be held at the Chemworld Training Room, 5th Floor Oppen Building, 349 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City. For more information, contact Chemworld Fragrance Institute at telephone numbers (632)895-4410, (632)890-9844 to 47 loc. 38 or 39; 0917-8736547/48, or e-mail chemwrld@info.com.ph.

Product FILES

New treats at Ministop

MINISTOP introduces its delectable year-openers. The fastest-growing combo store in the country presents a new line-up of two in one sandwiches available in three varieties: Corn and Cheese, Tuna and Egg, and Chicken Clubhouse priced at only P22. For the sweet tooth's satisfaction, Oatmeal Choco Chip and Oatmeal Raisin cookies are being offered in packs of five at P35. You can have a hearty party with Ministop favorites like Krunch Pao and Chicken, which are now available in different party packs. Certified food lovers can opt for the Chicken party packs in 6's and 10's. Or they can bring home Krunch Pao, Super Pao and sticks of Fried Wanton in packs of 10. Treat your palate with these sumptuous new treats from Ministop and make the year ahead even more exciting and satisfying. Visit the nearest Ministop outlet today .

MINI STOP
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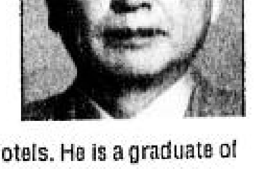
KABAYAN BRINGS RELIEF GOODS

Vice President Noli de Castro spearheads the Alay-Kabayan medical and dental relief operations for the typhoon and flood victims of Barangay Poblacion, Roxas Municipality, Oriental Mindoro. Three thousand families benefited from the operation and were also given rice, sugar and canned goods. Alay-Kabayan is a relief operation of the key shelter agencies which aims to bring relief goods and services to typhoon victims.

SENATOR FLAVIER DEFENDS HERBS

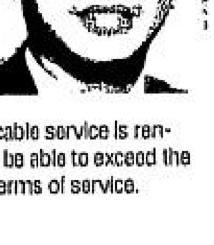
Senator Juan Flavier - an advocate on the value of herbs, strongly mentioned in an interview with Magandang Gabi Bayan, that herbs are safe. He says, 'herbs do work and have no known side-effects.' They are natural. Dr. Juan Flavier is the author of the traditional and alternative medicine act and a staunch supporter of herbal supplements. He spearheaded the support for traditional and endemic Philippine herbs such as ampalaya/ bitter gourd which in other countries is already recognized as an herb to help regulate blood sugar levels of diabetics. One of the herbal supplements to compliment the nutritional needs of diabetics is ABS Bitter Herbs capsule which contains 7 Power Herbs. It is available in Mercury Drugstores and major drugstores nationwide. To learn more visit www.abs-herbs.com.ph.

Dusit Hotel Nikko's new GM



THE MANAGEMENT of Dusit Hotel Nikko welcomed Ikuo Itoi as the hotel's new general manager. Itoi who hails from Japan has been with the JAL Hotels Company for several years before joining Dusit Hotel Nikko and has held the same position in various Nikko Hotels. He is a graduate of Engineering but it seemed that his forte is more on the field of hospitality services since most of his working years was spent in hotels.

Dusit's new assistant banquet service manager



LEONARDO Rivera is Dusit Hotel Nikko's new assistant banquet service manager. An HRM associate graduate of Adamson University, he was previously connected with a deluxe hotel and was holding the position of a banquet service manager. One of his duties is to ensure that impeccable service is rendered to every function and to be able to exceed the expectations of the guests in terms of service.

Investments to fuel growth of Mindanao economy in '05

DAVAO CITY—Investments trickling into the region have buoyed hopes that Mindanao will post a record economic growth this year.

Jesus Dureza, chair of the Mindanao Economic and Development Council, told the INQUIRER that improving peace and order conditions heightened business confidence as well as donors' interest in Mindanao, resulting in palpable economic gains for the country's food basket.

"Looking at the current Mindanao developments, there is so much optimism and confidence that Mindanao will sustain economic momentum and may even surpass economic growth recorded in the previous years," Dureza said.

He said Mindanao was banking on investments in the traditional agriculture industry - especially in tuna, banana and pineapples - which is geared for both domestic and export markets.

Dureza likewise expected the region to get a portion of the investments pouring into the information technology sector.

Two more call centers had already kicked off operations in Davao and General Santos, on top of CyberCity Teleservices put up by G-Com Ltd. in Davao.

Medco was likewise looking forward to two new big-ticket investments this year.

Pilipinas Kao Inc. (PKI), a Japanese-owned firm, is investing P3.7 billion in a new facility that will increase its fatty alcohol production to 100,000 tons a year.

The investment project will replace PKI's existing plant in Jasaan, Misamis Oriental.

Koresco, a South Korean resort and development company, is also constructing a 50-room leisure hotel at Pueblo Golf Estates in Cagayan de Oro City.

The hotel will be completed by the third quarter this year.

Mindanao attracted 15 new investment projects last year, which created 930 jobs from January to October.

These include projects of Petroline Resources Inc., in the northern region of the island; Philippine Service of Mercy Foundation Inc., Asephil Manufacturing Corp., Hayley & Amy Food Corp., Ginebra San Miguel Inc. and Global Trend Pacific Furniture.

Residential and commercial buildings also increased by 22.3 percent.

While Mindanao's foreign trade slumped in the first eight months of last year, the last quarter export figures were projected to level off with the export growth in 2003.

The local tourism sector has also showed some color after rebounding from a slump.

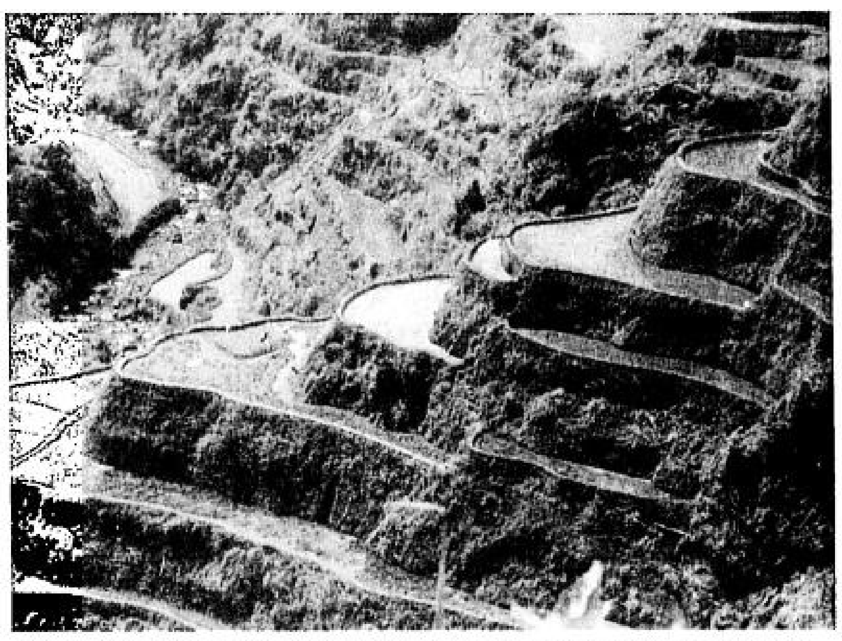
Some 659,757 incoming and outgoing air passengers were recorded in Mindanao airports, up 9.21 percent from the same period in 2003.

Also, Mindanao air cargo volume recorded a 5.43 percent hike as of third quarter last year, compared to the same period in 2003.

Jeffrey M. Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Neda calls for ₱1B more investments in tourism

By Michelle V. Remo



FACILITIES in key destinations, such as the Banaue Rice Terraces, could be further developed to spur growth of the tourism industry.

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority has urged government to set aside at least P1 billion in investments to maximize the potentials of the country's tourism industry.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri said the Philippines has a window of opportunity to position itself as a primary tourist destination, as travelers from Europe and the United States are looking for alternatives following the tsunami that devastated other parts of the region.

Neda said key destinations that will fuel tourism growth include: Cebu, Bohol, Camiguin, Palawan, Manila, Tagaytay, Davao, Vigan, Clark-Subic, Baguio, Banaue and Boracay.

If these and other tourist spots are marketed well, Neri said, the tourism sector could easily contribute a one-percentage point increase in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

"It will be good to increase our tourism budget by P1 billion to P2 billion. Now, we rely mostly on word of mouth, but we can achieve a lot more if we advertise," Neri said in a press briefing.

The country's chief economist also suggested that the government further liberalize the country's airlines by opening up more flights.

Neri said the Philippines has started to attract more tourists when its Asian neighbors were devastated by the tsunami, which killed an estimated 200,000 and destroyed many tourist facilities.

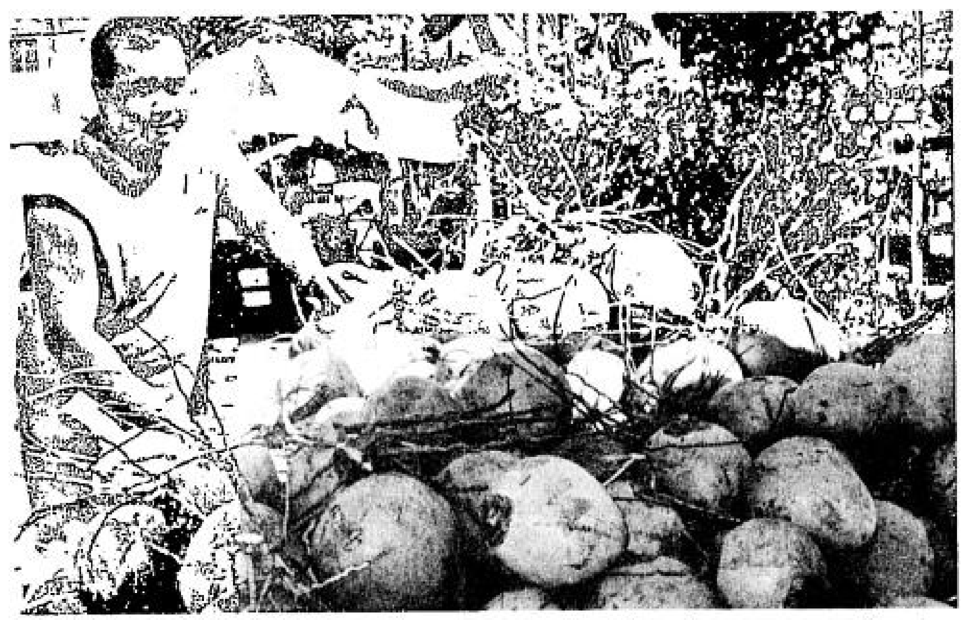
Bernardo Villegas, economist from the University of Asia and the Pacific, earlier said that one way for the Philippines to promote itself was to highlight its health services.

Since the Philippines is already a source of health care givers, he said the country could market itself as a health care hub for foreigners that need services like spas, cosmetic surgeries and medical treatment.

"What happened to our neighboring countries was unfortunate and is something that we should not be happy about. But while foreigners are looking for other destinations, the Philippines can very well be a tourist place for them," he said.

Tourist arrivals in the Philippines hit 1.84 million as of end-November last year, 23.6 percent more than the visitors in the same period the previous year.

Although the figure significantly improved, the tourism industry contributes only a measly 5 percent to GDP.



RENEWED interest in the world market for coconut-based products augurs well for the region's coconut farmers.

Prospects bright for coconut farmers in Eastern Visayas

PALO, Leyte—The Philippine Coconut Authority sees bright prospects for the region's more than 1.7 million coconut farmers this year.

This is due mainly to renewed interest in the benefits of coconut oil, and other products derived from coconuts, in both the local and world markets, according to Edilberto Nierva, chief of the PCA's Eastern Visayas unit.

The region could provide a good portion of the demand, he said, as coconut trees here will likely yield more nuts due to relatively good weather last year.

"We were blessed last year, because we did not experience destructive typhoons that could have affected our production," he told the INQUIRER.

Nierva said there was marked renewal of interest in copra, including oil and other products made from coconut, from China, Korea and European countries, such as Germany.

"These countries have already signified their interest and willingness to import from us. The problem is we could not meet their demand. But with a projected high production, we could just tap these markets and earn dollars for our country," he said.

Nierva admitted, however,that Eastern Visayas was still in the "infancy stage of commercialization" of coconut products.

He said there was a need to improve the quality of these coconut products to make these more competitive and attractive to the world market.

Eastern Visayas ranks third among the country's coconut producing regions, with annual earnings of $17 million.

The region produces 1.6 billion tons of copra annually.

Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau

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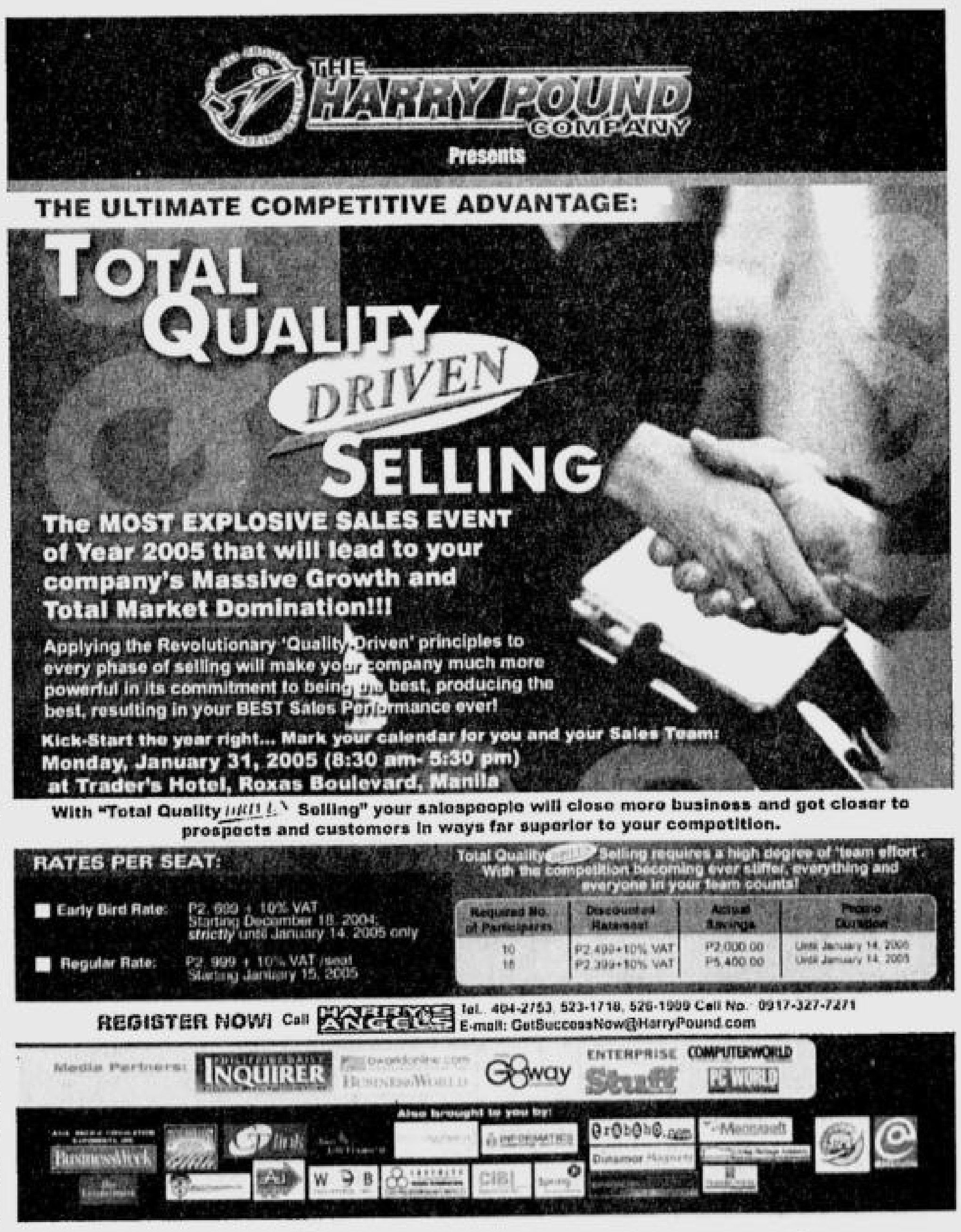
(PDI - Jan. 25, 2005)



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The **EDITHA MONASTERIO PULIDO MEMORIAL FOUNDATION, INC.** and her family request the pious reader to pray for her eternal repose.

> *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even if he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."*
>
> **JOHN 11:25-26**

Three years of triumph in the presence of our Lord

JOSE "Joe" M. ESTEBAN, JR.

Who peacefully joined his Creator
on January 25, 2002

Relatives and friends are requested to join his family in praying for his eternal repose.

Wife Menchu
Children & grandchildren Chim & Mabel, Celina, Joey & Miggy
Rolly & Alen, JP, Jonathan & Raya
RI and Liv, Anton, Rafa, Javi & Cito

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Our Lady of Fatima Church, Highway Hills, Mandaluyong City
St. Francis Church, Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City
St. Exequiel Moreno, Kaunlaran Village, Caloocan City
Sta. Rosa de Lima, Bagong Ilog, Pasig City
St. Stephen Church, Laur, Nueva Ecija
Asuncion Church, Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur
St. Louis Cathedral, Session Road, Baguio City
St. Joseph Church, Pacdal Road, Baguio City
Assumption Church, F. Torres, Davao City
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> **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."**
>
> John 3:16

In Loving Memory
on the
24th Death Anniversary of

Mariano B. Peñaflorida

who passed away on 26 January 1981

Masses will be offered
Wednesday, 26 January 2005 at the following:

Sanctuario de San Antonio .... 12:15 noon
Forbes Park
Sanctuario de San Jose .... 7:15 a.m.
Greenhills
St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori .... 6:00 p.m.
Magallanes
Our Lady of Beautiful Love .... 6:00 p.m.
Merville
Parish of the Holy Sacrifice .... 6:00 p.m.
U.P.
St. Joseph's Church .... 5:30 a.m.
Pototan, Iloilo
St. Clement's Church .... 5:30 p.m.
La Paz, Iloilo

The family requests relatives, friends and pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

PAZ JAJALIA GALEON (vda) de ACLAN

of Rizal Buenavista, Agusan del Norte

Died: January 23, 2005 at the age of 84.

Her loving children **Pastor** (†), **Santa Daragon, Feliciano** (†), **Columba** (†) **Canie, Nieves Gaña, Mar, Teodoro** (†) **Elizabeth Lariosa**; grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the repose of her soul.

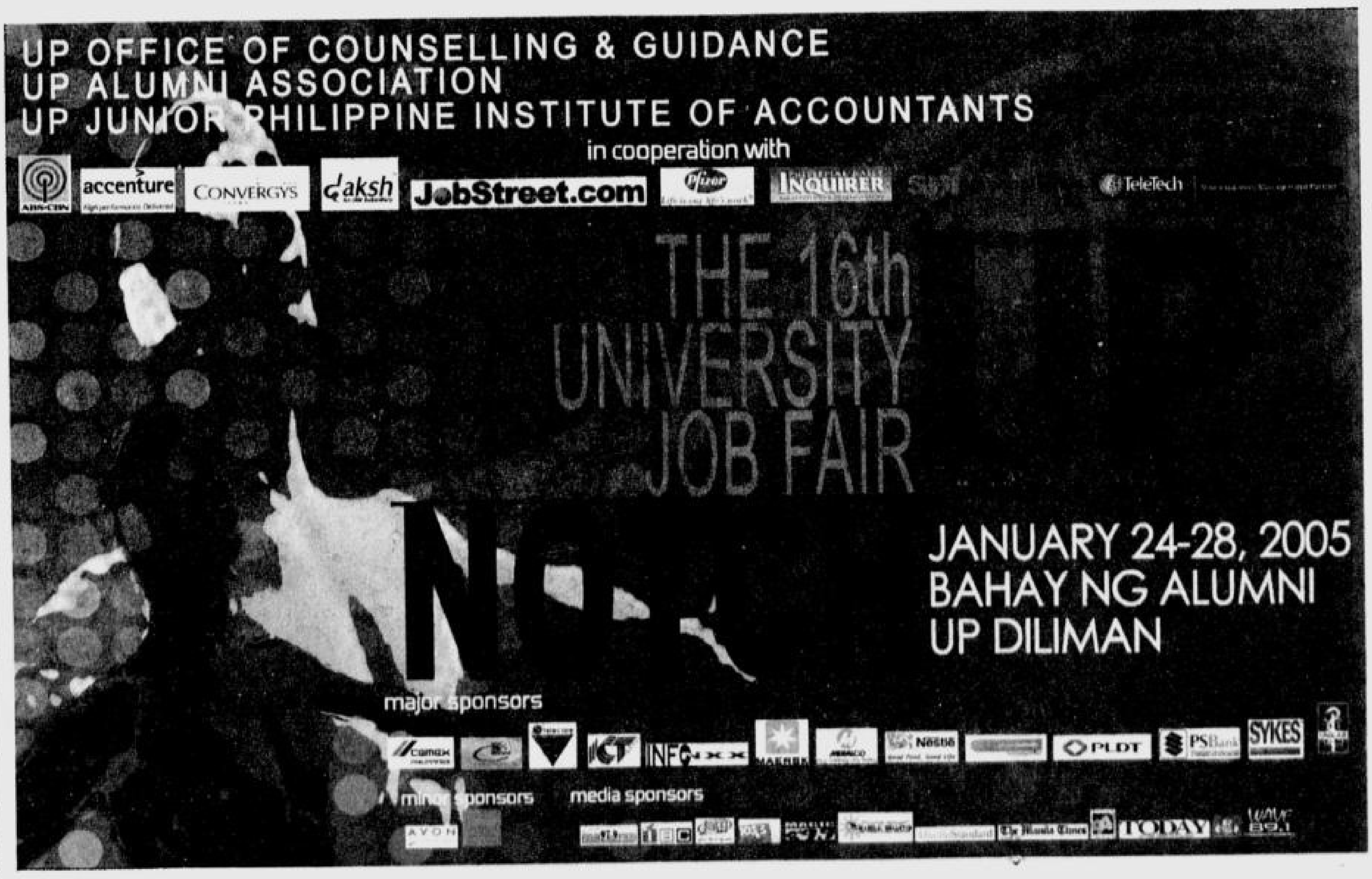
Her body lies in state at their family residence in Rizal Buenavista, Agusan del Norte.

Interment will be announced later.

CLASSIFIEDS

The 16th University of the Philippines Job Fair

The UP Office of Counseling and Guidance (UP OCG) together with UP Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants (UP JPIA) and UP Alumni Association (UPAA) started its grand event this year last Thursday, Jan. 20, in a motorcade around the UP Campus to promote the 16th University of the Philippines Job Fair. There will be orientation seminar series throughout the week, imparted by distinct company representatives starting from Tuesday to Friday, Jan. 25 to 28. There will also be a job hunt basics seminar series wherein students will be taught important job application guidelines. On Wednesday, Jan. 26, there will be a Power Dressing Seminar wherein students will be taught about the basics of corporate fashion from representatives of sponsoring apparels and cosmetic companies like Avon, Novecento, and Sari-Sari. Fun games and cultural presentations will also be a part of the event throughout the week. All students especially those who are graduating are invited to this grand event. Students are encouraged to bring several copies of their résumés and visit the 16th UP Job Fair on January 24 to 28, 2005, from 8-5pm at Ang Bahay ng Alumni, UP Campus, Diliman. There will also be a free processing of SSS number on the first two days just by bringing birth certificate and 1x1 picture.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THE 16th UNIVERSITY JOB FAIR
JANUARY 24-28, 2005
BAHAY NG ALUMNI
UP DILIMAN

Ayala: Emerging trends spell hope for RP

By Connie E. Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Bucking the gloomy spell cast by the country's current fiscal problems and the downgrade of its credit rating, the president of the Ayala Corporation said there were emerging trends that would allow the country to actually thrive over the next 10 years.

AYALA

Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala on Friday told delegates of the 3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention here that he remained optimistic in the country's future, believing that the Philippines soon would be in a position to "reap the demographic dividend" from its young population.

Ayala said that in 2005, the country's working age population would constitute 61.8 percent of the population. He expected this figure to increase to 63.9 percent by 2010, 65.6 percent by 2015, and 68 percent by 2025.

This is "radically different" to the structure of many developed countries that are seeing the percentage of their elderly going up, he said.

"To economists and demographers, such a demographic structure can present opportunities for economic growth," Ayala said. "Nations with such a demographic structure may enjoy a boost to income growth because of the higher share of the working population, the accelerated accumulation of capital, and reduced spending on dependents."

This demographic transition will, in the long run, stimulate economic growth when combined with effective public policies, he said.

The phenomenon, known as "the demographic dividend," is but one of many emerging trends Ayala cited to the convention delegates.

The other trends are the push toward electoral and judicial reforms, and the move to empower leaders at the local government level.

"These trends are already evident to some extent today and should amplify in the coming years," Ayala said. "When they do, they will have a profound effect on the level of dynamism in all sectors of society, which will provide a solid foundation for the country's sustained and accelerated modernization and development."

He also noted that the Supreme Court was finally aware of the drag its interventions had had on the economy.

"Its recent move to affirm the Mining Act should open up a long neglected sector that has so much potential," he said. "This to me is a positive indication that long-delayed cases are finally going to be settled, and that justice administration is being turned up a notch."

Another trend he cited was the rising role of free enterprise in the economy and the growing recognition of the importance of open markets and competition as the key to a better future.

With the rise of globalization, Ayala said it has become clear that certain policies of the past, like economic nationalism and protectionism, would not work.

"Filipino companies now realize they can no longer be shielded from foreign competition if the country is to go forward," he said. "The protectionist barriers and mindset are slowly coming down, and recent moves to encourage Asean economic integration will hasten this process.

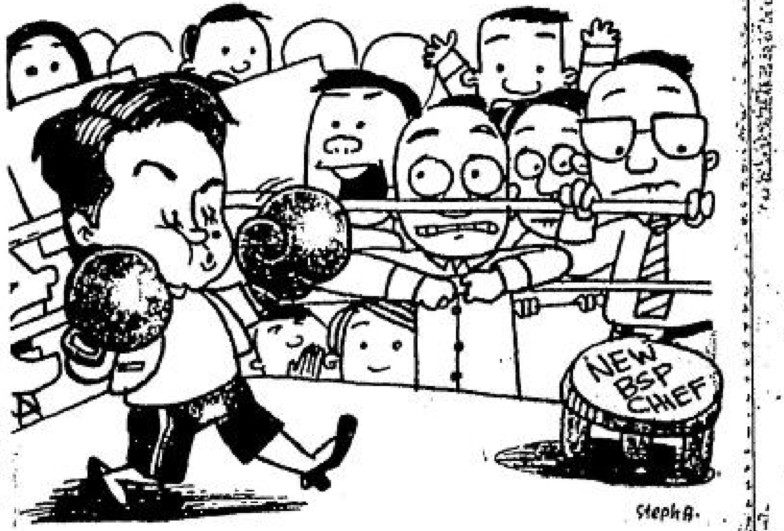
While these trends might be "harbingers of change," leading to the country's economic development, Ayala, however, said it would still be up to Filipinos to give "flesh and direction" to these changes taking place.

"If we can just focus our attention on essentials and the issues, adopt a single-minded attitude to making things work in our country, there is no reason why the Philippines cannot duplicate what other Asian countries have done or are doing," Ayala said.

The Philippines is currently in the grip of crippling fiscal problems. On Jan. 17, international credit ratings firm Standard & Poor's cut the country's credit rating by a notch over the government's perceived mishandling of the fiscal crisis.

Give us BSP chief with balls, traders urge

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.



THE NEXT Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas governor should have the "balls" to stand up to President Macapagal-Arroyo because appointing a perceived lackey to the central bank would be worse than a credit downgrade, according to local businessmen.

In their appeal, businessmen interviewed by the INQUIRER said that the designation of Cesar Purisima, former SGV&Co. chair, as finance chief should set the tone for Ms. Arroyo's next Cabinet appointments by getting more private sector experts in her government.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura's term is set to end in July this year and President Arroyo's choice for his replacement is highly anticipated by local and foreign businessmen because of its implications on monetary policy.

"We need an independent-minded person to head the BSP," said Raul Concepcion, chair of the private consumer watchdog Consumer and Oil Price Watch. "Someone who has the balls to say no to bad monetary policy."

"The next central bank governor should be credible and instill confidence among foreign and local investors," said Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Philippine Exporters Confederation president. "I don't think it is advisable to have someone that is seen as too close to Malacañang. That is worse than a credit downgrade."

Standard & Poor's recently cut the country's credit rating one notch due to dissatisfaction over the government's handling of the fiscal crisis.

A businessman noted that Buenaventura proved to be an ideal BSP head in the last three years (which included an election year) because he is considered an "outsider" in the Arroyo administration having been appointed by deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Although it will be the President who will pick the man to head the central bank in the next six years, the BSP charter requires its head to be independent because monetary policy is not always in tune with the fiscal policy especially on the level of government borrowings that affects interest rates and inflation.

Two candidates in the running for BSP chief—Securities and Exchange Commission chair Fe Barin and Monetary Board member Vicente Valdepeñas—are perceived to be "too close" to the President.

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What exercise can and can't do

Part Two

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

ONE of the top reasons people exercise is to improve their appearance. Vanity can be a strong motivator. There is nothing wrong with wanting to look your best.

But if improving your appearance is the main reason you exercise, you should know and accept what it can and cannot do for you.

Exercise is not a cure-all for figure problems. You have to be realistic about what you can achieve so you do not get discouraged and quit. That's a real shame because being fit delivers so many other benefits absolutely necessary for your health.

Breasts

Breasts are composed of fatty tissues and milk glands. Their size is determined mostly by genetics. Chest exercises are designed to make the muscles under the breasts firmer so the entire chest area looks fuller but they cannot make the breasts bigger. Breasts do not have any muscles.

Chest exercises also cannot do much for sagging breasts because the skin and the ligaments attaching the breasts to the chest have already sagged beyond repair.

The opposite is true though with regards to exercise making breasts smaller. As you lose weight, fat cells in your breasts also shrink. If you are a large-breasted woman, this may be a pleasant side effect of exercise but if you have small breasts, you may not be so happy.

If you want to dramatically increase breast size or lift sagging breasts, you need a push-up bra or a plastic surgeon. If you want a drastic reduction in breast size, you can try to lose weight or have breast reduction surgery.

Calves

Most people don't store fat in the calf area. Bulk is usually due to large calf muscles. This may be inherited or the muscles may be abnormally short and tight from wearing high heels, doing uphill walking, or engaging in sports that require a lot of jumping.

Doing calf stretches for 30 to 60 seconds several times a day as well as staying away from the offending activity (wearing lower heels, walking on a flat surface, and avoiding sports with jumping) can help to bring the muscles back to their original length and make the calves look slimmer.

If, on the other hand, you want bigger calves, be prepared for hard work. It is difficult (but not impossible) to turn genetically small calves into bulky ones. Calf muscles are quite strong and require a lot of resistance to make them bigger.

Cellulite

Research suggests cellulite is not a special kind of fat but ordinary fat trapped under thin skin and connective tissue attached in a way that makes fat bulge. Exercise can help improve the appearance of cellulite by reducing the size of fat cells and increasing the size of muscle fibers in the cellulite-prone areas.

It is highly unrealistic to expect exercise to give you flawless hips, thighs and buttocks if you have a genetic tendency to develop cellulite.

Treatments like mesotherapy and endermologie, two non-surgical procedures for eliminating fat and cellulite, are helpful but they are not permanent. Like exercise, you will have to do them regularly to maintain whatever results you achieve.

Stretched skin

Tight firm muscles can help to "pull" in stretched skin but only slightly. For example, firming up the muscles of the abdomen can help somewhat to lessen the appearance of loose abdominal skin but only a little.

No amount of Pilates or core conditioning exercises will tighten skin that has become overstretched from pregnancy or obesity. A "tummy tuck" is the only solution.

If you lose weight drastically, take note that your skin may sag (the older you are, the more likely this will happen). It is always wiser to lose weight slowly to give your skin time to adjust to your new size.

Exercise does absolutely nothing for stretch marks.

Stubborn fat

Even when your weight and body fat percentage are normal, stubborn pockets of fat may remain. They are usually at the sides of the thighs (saddlebags) or lower abdomen (*pusori*) for women and around the waist (love handles) for men. Other people have them in the upper back.

No amount of spot exercises like leg lifts or abdominal crunches will remove these annoying pockets of fat. Nature may be forcing you to hang on to the fat deposits even if you are slim as a matter of survival.

In olden times, they may help you survive a long famine. This means you would have to become almost skeletal to get rid of the fat. That will be unhealthy and unflattering.

Invasive (liposuction) and non-invasive (lipodissolve, mesotherapy, etc.) cosmetic procedures may be the answer but be warned: If you do not maintain your weight or body fat percentage, you may develop new pockets of fat in other places.

Height

Exercise cannot make your bones longer but it can make you taller by improving your posture and perhaps by increasing the space between vertebrae. Pilates, in particular, has been credited with helping people achieve their true genetic height potential.

While there is no hard scientific evidence for this yet, many people claim to have "grown" an inch or two with regular Pilates exercise.

Weight

Exercise cannot do it all if you want to lose weight. No matter how much you work out, if you continue to stuff your face with starchy, sugary and fatty food, you will still be overweight.

Exercise, together with sensible eating, is the best way to lose weight and maintain the weight loss forever. Just remember that the eating part is very important. Don't think that just because you exercise, you can eat whatever and as much as you want. You may end up fit but also fat.

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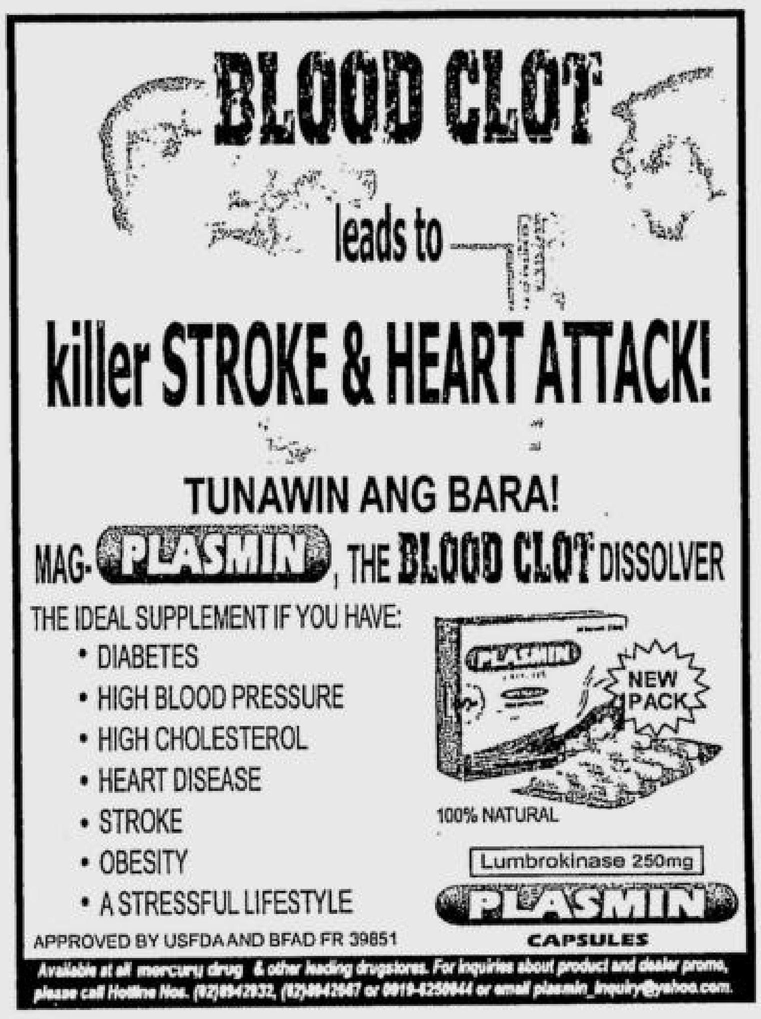

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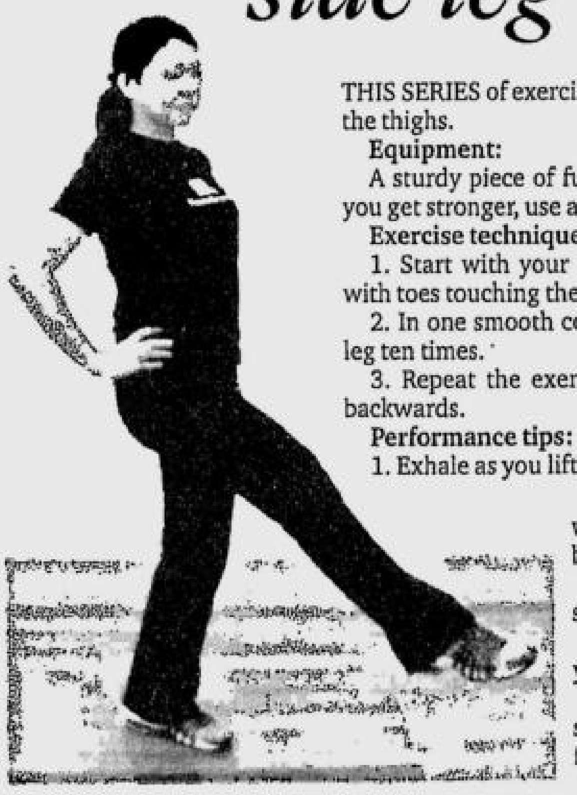
EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Front, side, back, side leg lift



THIS SERIES of exercises firms the front, side, and back of the thighs.

Equipment:

A sturdy piece of furniture to hold for balance. When you get stronger, use ankle weights (optional).

Exercise technique:

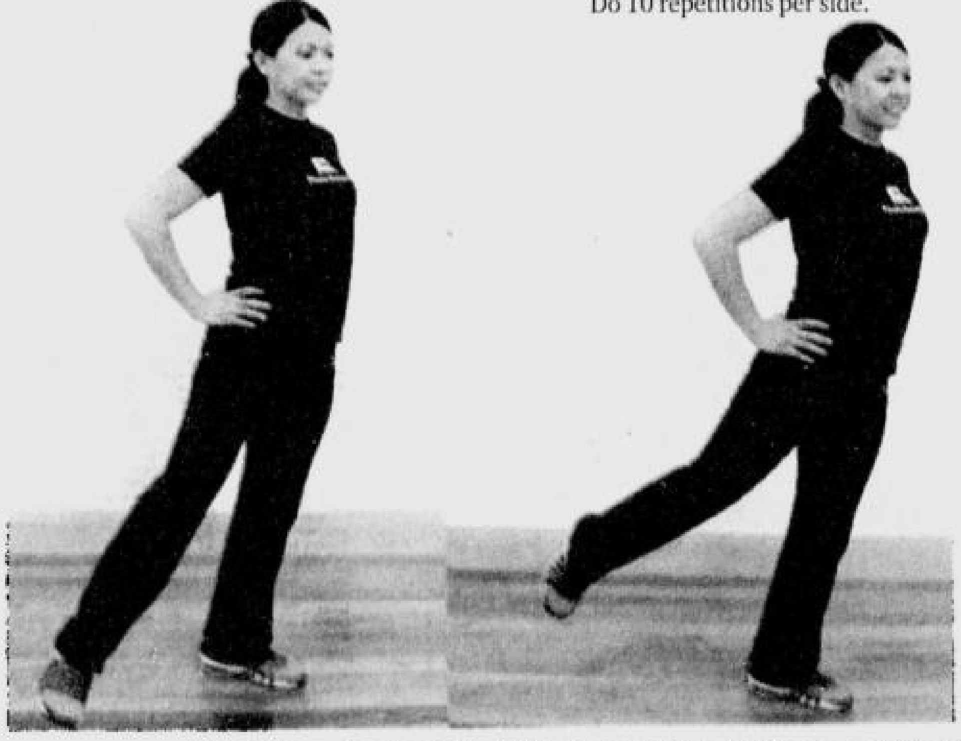
1. Start with your right leg extended in front of you with toes touching the floor.
2. In one smooth controlled move, lift and lower your leg ten times.
3. Repeat the exercise lifting your leg sideways and backwards.

Performance tips:

1. Exhale as you lift your leg; inhale as you lower.
2. Lift only as high as you can without rounding or arching your back.
3. Take one second to lift and one second to lower.
4. When lifting to the side, keep your toes and knee facing forward.
5. Keep your supporting leg slightly bent if you feel it is uncomfortable to keep your knee straight.

Repetitions:

Do 10 repetitions per side.



Take Charge Doc!

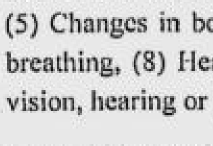
Dr. Nicky S. Montoya

Take Charge Doc! is your weekly question and answer guide on general health issues and illnesses. MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. And in a common thrust with the campaigns of the government, Take Charge Doc! parallels its features on the Calendar of Health Events of the Department of Health.

What are some of the common signs and symptoms of cancer?

The signs and symptoms of cancer can usually be attributed to the organ or area involved, either as the origin of the disease or through its spread. These signs and symptoms are usually specific and distinct, however on occasion, they can be very subtle and non-specific. These symptoms take on more significance if one belongs to a high risk group for a particular cancer because of age, lifestyle habits or familial predisposition. The following signs and symptoms, individually or in combination, should alert one to consult a medical specialist if they are persistent over long periods (weeks) or progressively worsening despite conventional treatments: (1) A persistent mass or lump, (2) Pain, persistent and/or progressive, (3) Bleeding or discharge, (4) A non-healing wound or ulcer, (5) Changes in bowel habits, (6) Changes in voice or swallowing, (7) Persistent cough or difficulty breathing, (8) Headache, vomiting, seizures, weakness or changes in mental status, (9) Changes in vision, hearing or persistent nasal obstruction and (10) Unexplained weight loss.

It should be emphasized that in early stages, some cancers may NOT have any signs and symptoms. This underscores the value of the screening tests for certain cancers, e.g. uterine cervix, breast, prostate, etc. For particular individuals at risk, these tests offer early detection and may provide a higher potential for cure.



This week's feature question on cancer signs and symptoms was provided by **Dr. Gaudencio P. Vega.** Dr. Vega, a long time medical service provider of MEDICard, is a graduate of UP College of Medicine. He specializes in Internal Medicine and holds a subspecialty degree in Radio-Oncology. Dr. Vega holds clinic at the MRI section of Chinese General Hospital every Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 to 4 PM, at the Radiation Clinic of St. Luke's Medical Center every Tuesdays and Thursdays also from 1 to 4 PM and in the Cobalt Section of The Medical City Hospital every Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8 to 11 in the morning.

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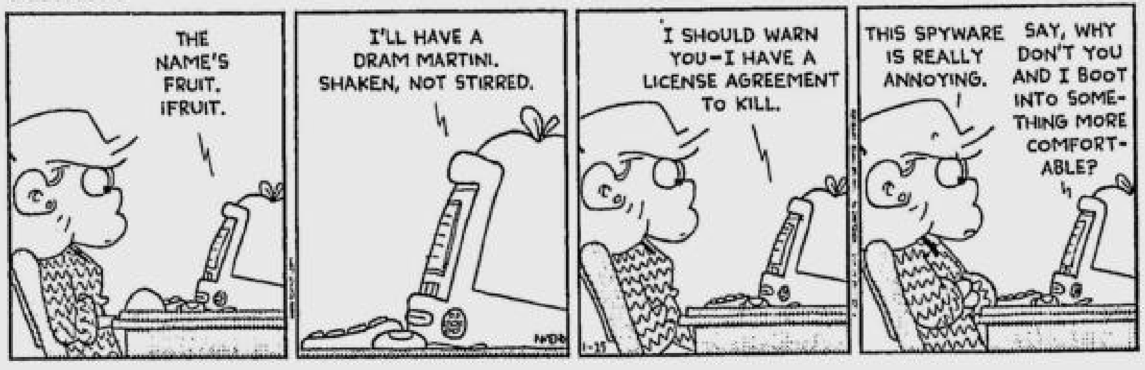
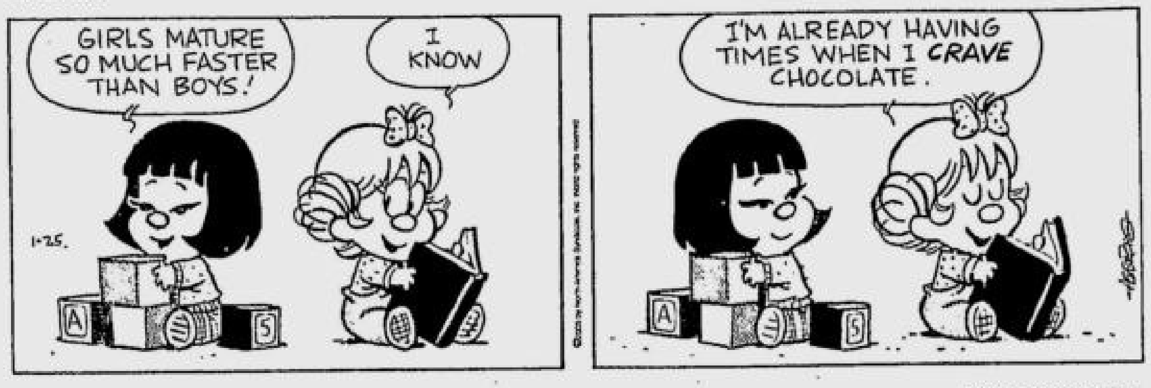
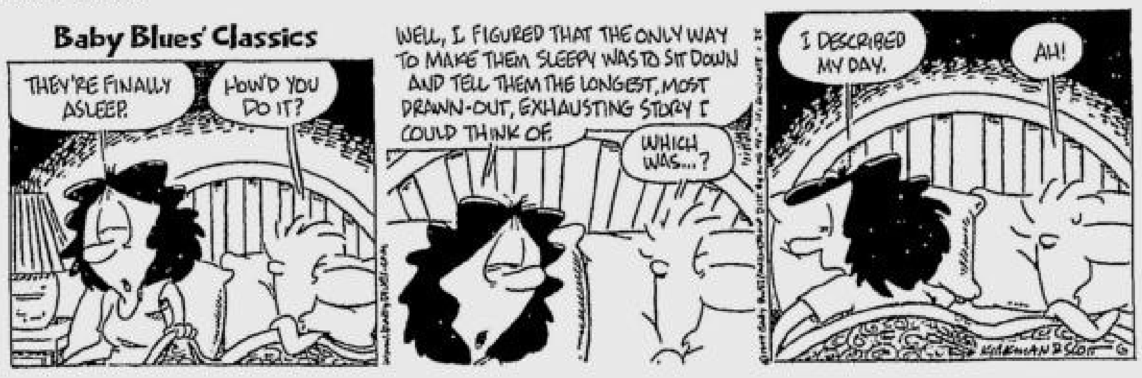

THE NAME'S FRUIT. IFRUIT.
I'LL HAVE A DRAM MARTINI. SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED.
I SHOULD WARN YOU—I HAVE A LICENSE AGREEMENT TO KILL.
THIS SPYWARE IS REALLY ANNOYING.
SAY, WHY DON'T YOU AND I BOOT INTO SOMETHING MORE COMFORTABLE?

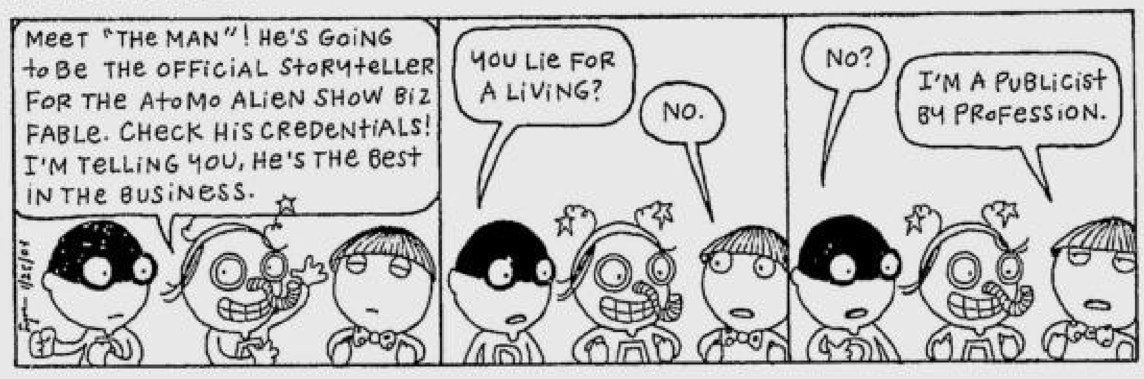
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


GIRLS MATURE SO MUCH FASTER THAN BOYS!
I KNOW
I'M ALREADY HAVING TIMES WHEN I CRAVE CHOCOLATE.
1-25

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


Baby Blues' Classics
THEY'RE FINALLY ASLEEP.
HOW'D YOU DO IT?
WELL, I FIGURED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE THEM SLEEPY WAS TO SIT DOWN AND TELL THEM THE LONGEST, MOST DRAWN-OUT, EXHAUSTING STORY I COULD THINK OF.
WHICH WAS...?
I DESCRIBED MY DAY.
AH!

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Meet "THE MAN"! He'S GoiNG to Be THE OFFiCiAL StoRytelleR FOR THE AtoMo ALieN SHoW Biz FABLe. CHeCK HiS CReDeNtiALS! I'M TeLLiNG YoU, He'S THe Best iN THe BUSiNeSS.
YoU Lie FoR A LiViNG?
NO.
No?
I'M A PuBLiCist By PRoFeSSioN.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: People find you interesting. (And you are.) Your life has considerable variety—frequently, with variations of fortune. You are imaginative and talented. You are also highly individualistic. You have high ideals and strong beliefs. You are unusually talented, many of you to the point of genius level. The year ahead is social, entertaining and fun-loving.

Birthdate of: Virginia Woolf, writer; Etta James, singer; Alicia Keys, R & B diva.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be patient with parents and bosses. Quite likely, someone will be critical of you. (Naturally, you'll feel the same about him or her.) Best to keep quiet.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Don't shoot down somebody's philosophical or religious ideas . On the other hand, don't let anybody else do this to you. When it comes to deeply held beliefs, live and let live.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You might be disappointed in how something is divided or shared today. You might have expected more. Make sure that you are not being treated unfairly.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Be extra-patient with close friends and partners today. People feel worried today, even critical. Try not to take it personally.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You might be worried about something at work. Possibly, coworkers are critical or distant. This is temporary; pay it no attention. (These things happen.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Don't be demanding in your expectations of children. If you feel unhappy about something, it's easy to pass this feeling on to someone else. Instead, be understanding, sympathetic and forgiving.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is not a day for family discussions. Don't ask anyone to help you or lend you anything. Try to work by yourself as much you can.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Today you are worried about something. There's an old saying: Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do but gets you nowhere. Think about it.

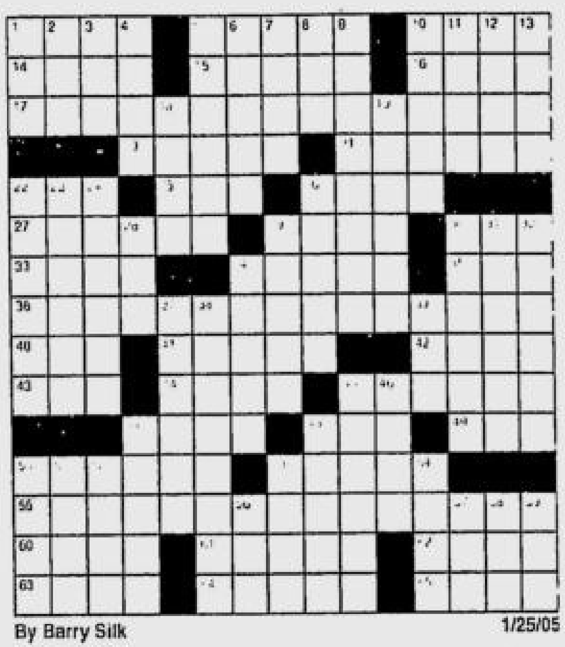
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Money is a curious thing. Our attitude about it and our feelings of wealth have surprisingly little to do with what we own. Today you feel broke. (Next week you might feel completely different.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Don't be discouraged by critical comments from others. People are in a negative frame of mind today. (They are unhappy. Negativity is wanting things to be different from the way they are.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Try to ignore uncomfortable feelings you have today that make you doubt yourself. Someone might say something that feeds your own worst fears about yourself. This is just a temporary dark cloud on your horizon.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Conversations with an older friend might be problematic today. You don't have to live up to the expectations of others. That's their problem.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Barry Silk
McLean, VA
1/25/05

ACROSS
1 Location
5 AM/FM device
10 Chances
14 Resting on
15 Actor Flynn
16 Wordsmith Webster
17 Paula
20 Deep gorge
21 Was uneasy about
22 Take one's choice
25 Night before
26 Envelope feature
27 Hold it right there!
29 Oh, dear!
30 No. cruncher
33 Bart's sister
34 San Antonio landmark
35 Research room
36 Paula
40 Summer shirt
41 Wood shaper
42 Chip in
43 Optic orb
44 Director Kazan
45 Temperance crusader Carry
47 One who serves well
48 Broadway smash
49 PC monitor element
50 007 and 99, e.g.
53 Port of Iraq
55 Paula
60 No ifs, _ or buts
61 Main artery
62 Get shut out, e.g.
63 Pain in the neck
64 Atomic number 54
65 Holy cow!

DOWN
1 Anatomical pouch
2 Robert of Lance
3 Actor Hanks
4 The "Iliad" or "Odyssey"
5 Fix potholes
6 Stood up
7 Ear membrane
8 Charged atom
9 Ex
10 Scheduled next
11 Gateway
12 Copenhagen citizen
13 Tool building
18 At the home of
19 Kind of ticket
22 Recently
23 Expensive
24 Final taker, e.g.
26 Emergency light
28 Something to lend or bend
29 First Greek letter
30 Medical facility
31 Christian minister
32 Missing
34 Up and about
37 Votes into office
38 Shopper's levy
39 Make lace
45 Maxima maker
46 Gillette razor
47 Uneasy feeling
48 Is left with no options
50 PDQ relative
51 Used up
52 Make/meet connector
53 Swiss capital
54 Competent
56 Shad delicacy
57 Canis familiaris
58 "Surfin' _"
59 Called the shots

Monday's Puzzle Solved

A	S	H	■	S	P	O	D	E	■	F	R	A	I	L
B	I	O	■	A	R	I	E	L	■	A	O	R	T	A
E	R	R	■	G	I	L	A	M	O	N	S	T	E	R
I	F	N	A	■	Z	E	N	■	U	T	T	E	R	S
■	■	E	A	T	E	R	■	S	T	A	R	■	■	■
C	A	D	R	E	S	■	M	A	S	S	A	C	H	E
E	L	T	O	N	■	M	O	S	E	Y	■	H	E	W
L	I	O	N	■	R	O	A	S	T	■	L	A	C	E
E	V	A	■	F	A	N	N	Y	■	F	E	M	U	R
R	F	D	S	O	R	E	S	■	L	E	V	E	R	S
■	■	■	T	R	E	Y	■	H	A	Z	E	L	■	■
A	L	A	R	M	L	■	A	I	M	■	I	E	A	D
G	O	L	I	A	T	H	F	R	O	L	■	O	R	E
A	L	O	F	T	■	A	R	E	N	A	■	N	A	N
R	A	T	E	S	■	M	O	R	T	S	■	S	L	Y

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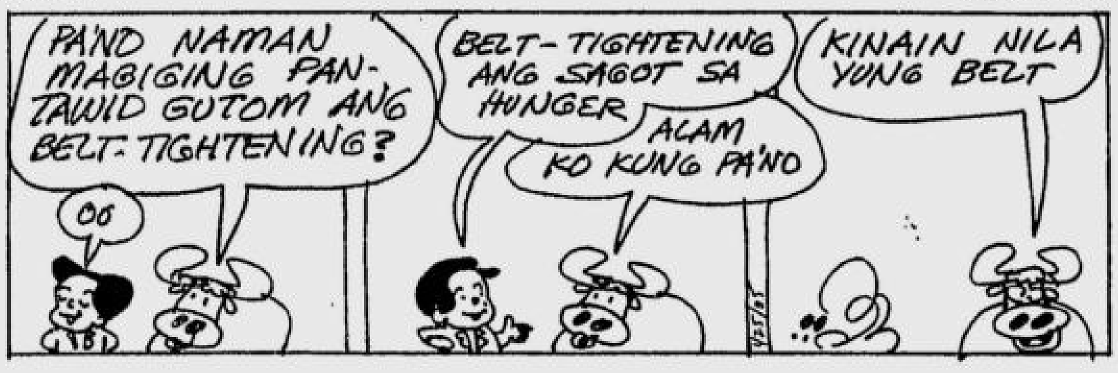
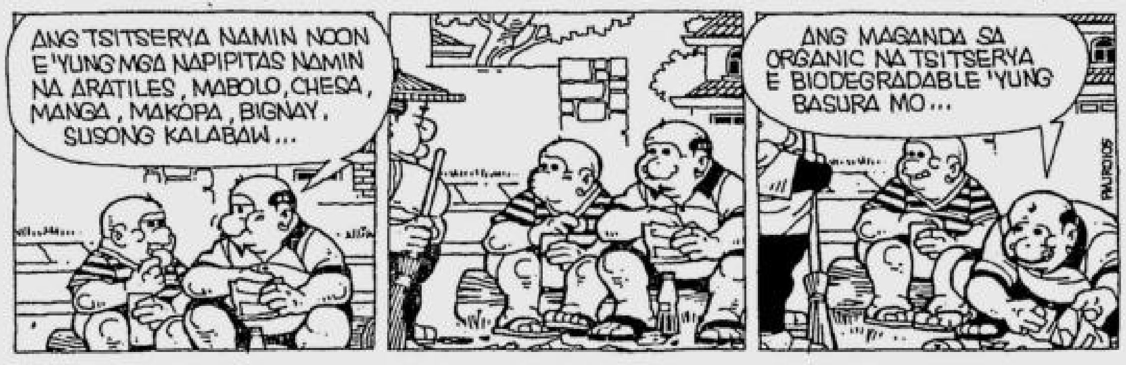
1/25/05

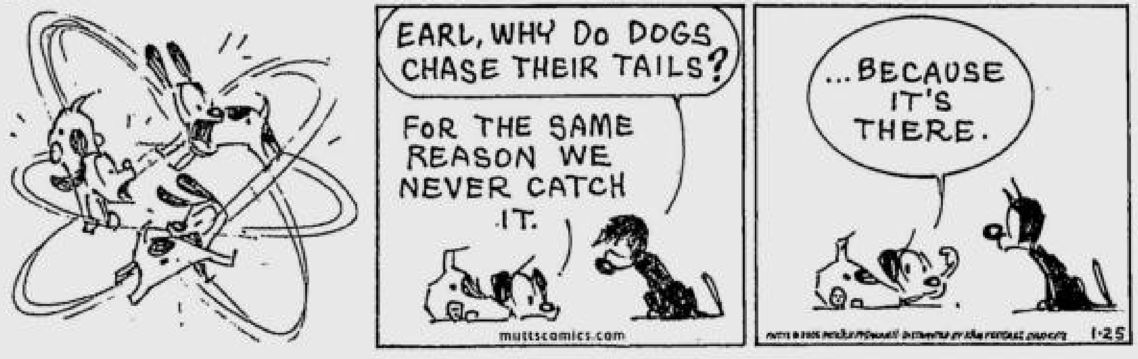
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


PA'NO NAMAN MAGIGING PAN-TAWID GUTOM ANG BELT-TIGHTENING?
OO
BELT-TIGHTENING ANG SAGOT SA HUNGER
ALAM KO KUNG PA'NO
KINAIN NILA YUNG BELT

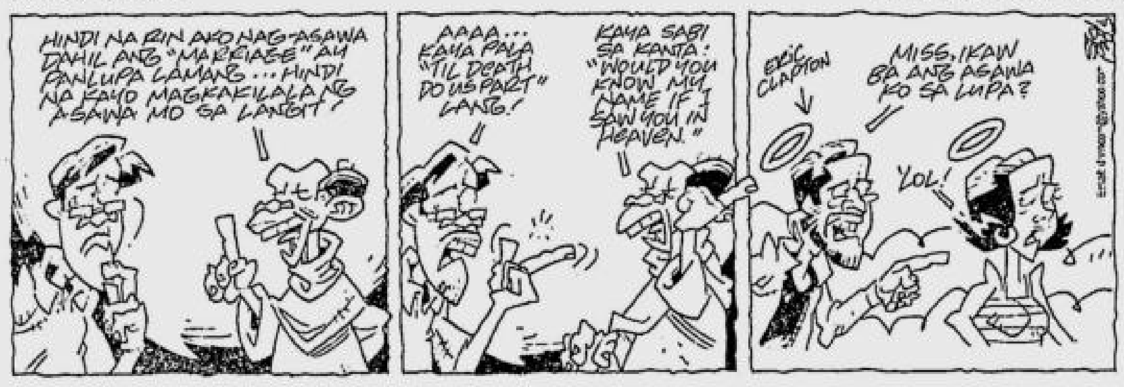
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANG TSITSERYA NAMIN NOON E 'YUNG MGA NAPIPITAS NAMIN NA ARATILES, MABOLO, CHESA, MANGA, MAKOPA, BIGNAY, SUSONG KALABAW...
ANG MAGANDA SA ORGANIC NA TSITSERYA E BIODEGRADABLE 'YUNG BASURA MO...

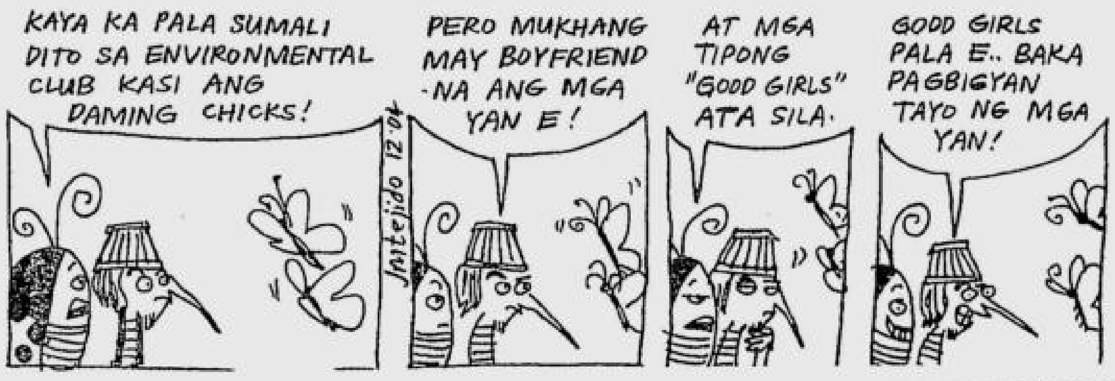
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


EARL, WHY Do DOGS CHASE THEIR TAILS?
FoR THE SAME REASON WE NEVER CATCH IT.
...BECAUSE IT'S THERE.
muttscomics.com
1-25

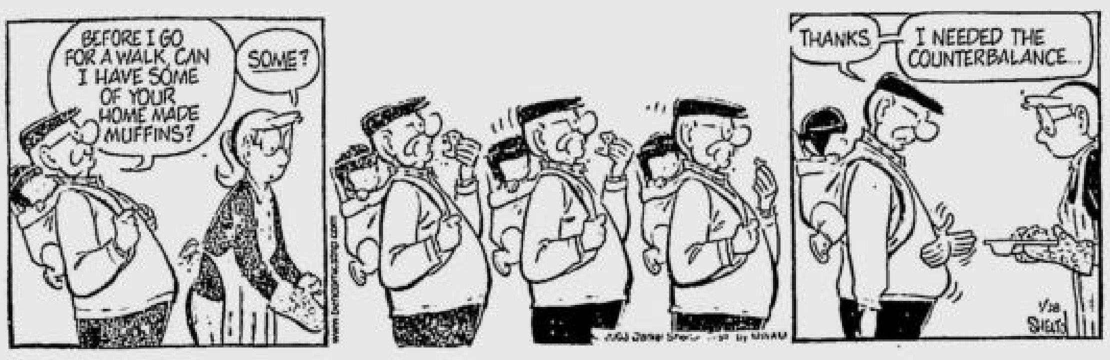
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


HINDI NA RIN AKO NAG-ASAWA DAHIL ANG "MARRIAGE" AY PANLUPA LAMANG... HINDI NA KAYO MAGKAKILALANG ASAWA MO SA LANGIT!
AAAA... KAYA PALA "TIL DEATH DO US PART" LANG!
KAYA SABI SA KANTA: "WOULD YOU KNOW MY NAME IF I SAW YOU IN HEAVEN."
ERIC CLAPTON
MISS, IKAW BA ANG ASAWA KO SA LUPA?
YOL!

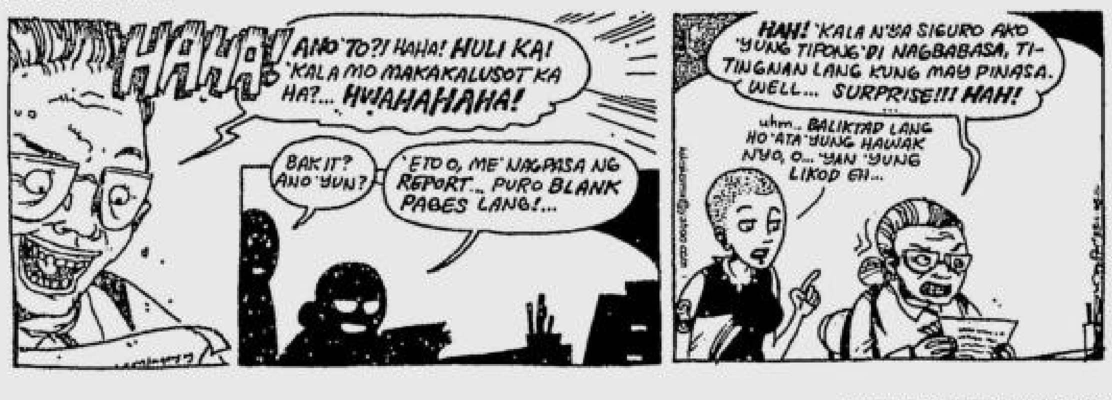
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


KAYA KA PALA SUMALI DITO SA ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB KASI ANG DAMING CHICKS!
PERO MUKHANG MAY BOYFRIEND NA ANG MGA YAN E!
AT MGA TIPONG "GOOD GIRLS" ATA SILA.
GOOD GIRLS PALA E.. BAKA PAGBIGYAN TAYO NG MGA YAN!
Jmtejido 12.04

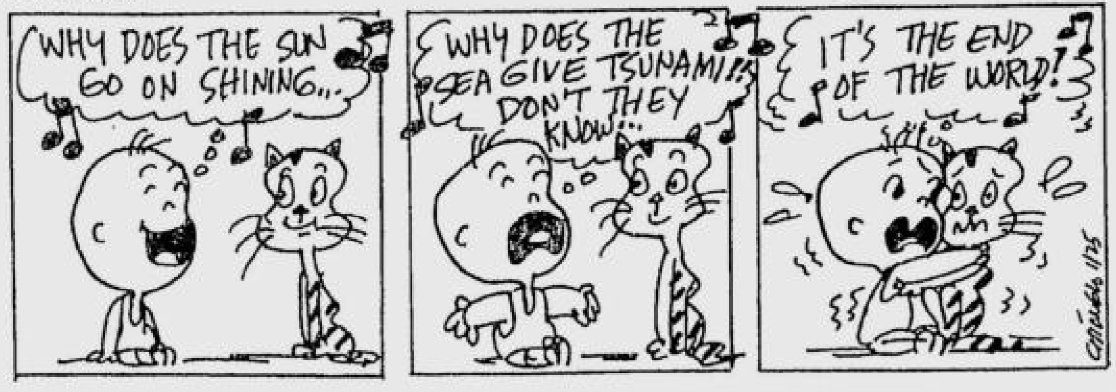
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


BEFORE I GO FOR A WALK, CAN I HAVE SOME OF YOUR HOME MADE MUFFINS?
SOME?
THANKS.
I NEEDED THE COUNTERBALANCE...

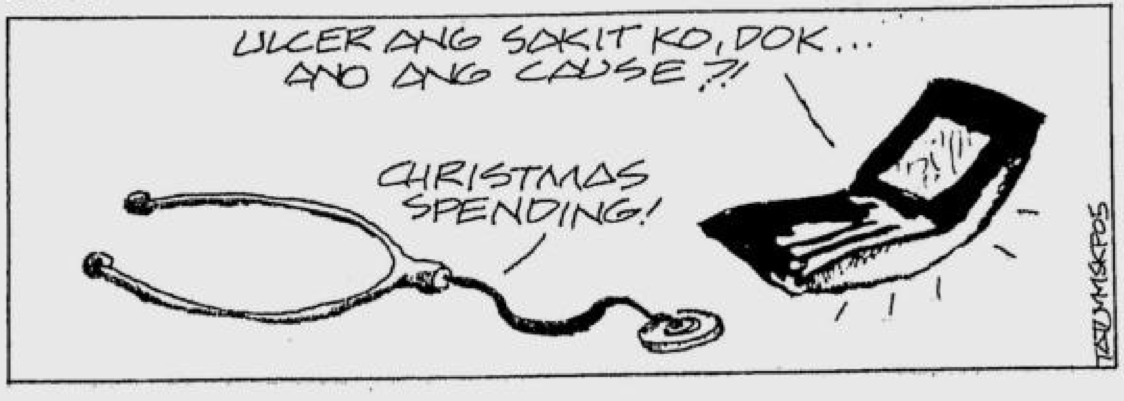
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


HAHA!
ANO 'TO?! HAHA! HULI KA! 'KALA MO MAKAKALUSOT KA HA?... HWAHAHAHAHA!
BAKIT? ANO 'YUN?
'ETO O, ME' NAGPASA NG REPORT... PURO BLANK PAGES LANG!...
HAH! 'KALA N'YA SIGURO AKO 'YUNG TIPONG 'DI NAGBABASA, TITINGNAN LANG KUNG MAY PINASA. WELL... SURPRISE!!! HAH!
uhm.. BALIKTAD LANG HO 'ATA 'YUNG HAWAK NYO, O... 'YAN 'YUNG LIKOD EH...

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


WHY DOES THE SUN GO ON SHINING...
WHY DOES THE SEA GIVE TSUNAMI!? DON'T THEY KNOW...
IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ULCER ANG SAKIT KO, DOK... ANO ANG CAUSE?!
CHRISTMAS SPENDING!

Be proud of yourself

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

SOME people find it easy to like themselves while others have great difficulty. It's all about body image—accepting who you are and being proud of it.

In a survey of 1,000 women (aged 18-60), Dr. Keanney Cooke and Ruth Striegel Moore, Ph.D, associate professors at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, found that 68 percent of women believed that being attractive was very important. An astounding 91 percent said they wanted to change their bodies.

The survey found that 20 percent were unhappy about their faces, 45 percent muscle tone, 32 percent breast size, 40 percent total appearance.

Form vs. function

Good looks and great impact on people do not guarantee a good body image. No matter how many times you have your face or body redone through cosmetic surgery, your confidence level will remain low if you do not learn to be happy with yourself.

A fantastic form does not guarantee freedom from your insecurities. Take the case of Juliet. At 43, she realized there were women more attractive than her. Although still a looker, she felt it wasn't enough. She wanted to turn back the clock to when she was 23.

She went to the first plastic surgeon she met without looking at his credentials. Getting herself oversized breast implants, she was satisfied at first with the results. Her nose was redone to appear sharper as well.

But after two weeks, she realized she made a mistake. She developed a fever and infection in her left breast. As a result, she looked abnormal, felt sick, was in pain and couldn't walk properly.

She rushed to the clinic of Dr. Raul Guanzon. According to the good surgeon, Juliet's case is not uncommon. "There is still hope after surgery gone wrong," he says. "But the best policy of all is to be happy with yourself."

In his years of practice, Dr. Guanzon found more men were now conscious about their looks than a decade ago. Different genders have different preferences in terms of changing their looks.

Men went for eye bag removal, liposuction, nose or face lift. Women sought to change their nose or eyes, undergo liposuction or facelift. Gays went for breast augmentation, nose change, liposuction, facelift.

Did the changes improve his patients' satisfaction rate? Dr. Guanzon said 98 percent were happy with the results and the positive impact they had on their lives. Some two percent, however, wanted their old shapes back, asking him to undo the surgery.

Apparently, being unprepared for the changes plunged them into depression. His advice to those considering cosmetic surgery:

1. Mentally prepare yourself for the changes and accept them as resulting from your own choice.
2. Choose a doctor with good medical credentials and track record. Make sure he is a member of the Philippine Society for Cosmetic Surgery or the Philippine Society for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.
3. Make sure you are physically well.

Dr. Guanzon stresses, "Know your limits." An overdone face and body can appear unnatural. Know when to stop having nips and tucks.

And what of Juliet? Her breast was opened up because of the infection and new implants proportional to her height and bone structure were placed. Her nose was reshaped to fit her bone structure.

Stop judging yourself

You may be harsh and cruel in judging yourself. If you are guilty of this, stop right away. Here's a little test which I have altered to fit all genders:

1. Do you think thin people are generally more competent than overweight people?
2. Do you think thin people are more able to feel sexual satisfaction than overweight people?
3. Are most people you admire slim?
4. Do you want to be thinner?
5. Do you wish parts of your body would disappear?
6. Do you think you would have more choices of sexual partners if you were thinner?
7. Do you think job opportunities would be greater if you were thinner?
8. Do you put off activities or starting relationships until you are thinner?
9. Do you think overweight people don't deserve job promotions, sexual partner's admiration or respect?
10. Do you think most men and women should be slim?
11. Do you think most people don't try hard enough to be slim?
12. Do you consider yourself "bad" when you eat certain foods and "good" when you restrict your eating?
13. Do you believe you are overweight?

Interpretation: If you have more than one yes answer to questions 1-8, then you do believe, like the majority that your body isn't good enough and that a thinner you will easily lead to success. If you answer yes to questions 9-12, you accept the message that thin is good, fat is bad. If your answer is yes to question 13, you believe that you're not good enough. (From "The Body Image Trap" by Marion Crook)

Good enough

Whether or not you are good enough is entirely up to you. Your inner voice is never wrong, once you quiet your mind and other people's chatter.

Sit still and honestly ask yourself if changes are in order. Then, list them down in a notebook and embark on a "New You, New Me" project.

Each time you want to do something, start a new diet or exercise program or munch on a certain kind of food, or start a new relationship, always ask yourself, is this good enough for me?

Be guided by the body, mind and spirit rule. Love yourself. That's as good a start as any.

Love and light!

Reference: Dr. Raul Guanzon at 7224972; 6830448

Is out-of-body experience simply a neurological disorder?

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

HOW does science look at the phenomenon of out-of-body experience (OOBE) or astral projection?

My Australian friend, Donald McDowall, a well-known chiropractor and psychic researcher from Australia who is married to a Filipina clairvoyant, Annie, gave me a copy of an article from the Internet explaining OOBE from a neurological standpoint.

The article (OOBE and their Neural Basis) began with a description of a typical out-of-body experience:

"I was in bed and about to fall asleep when I had the distinct impression that I was at the ceiling level looking down at my body on the bed. I was very startled and frightened; immediately (afterwards) I felt that I was consciously back in the (body on the) bed again."

The author, Professor Olaf Blanke of the Laboratory of Cognitive Neuroscience in a Swiss University, says "recent neurological evidence shows that these experiences are related to an interference with the temporo-parietal junction of the brain." This is the part of the brain that gives a person a sense of selfhood.

Ten percent

Blanke says OOBE occurs in about 10 percent of the population, most of the world's cultures and several medical conditions.

I wonder how he arrived at the 10 percent figure. I would assume majority of people have such experiences. However, many are reluctant to tell their stories.

Blanke adds: "Some clinicians have observed OOBE in association with various neurological conditions, but mainly in epileptic seizures and migraine. These early reports have also allowed us to link OOBE with deficient visual, vestibular, and multi-sensory processing."

Notice how scientists regard OOBE as not normal. They suggest sickness.

Blanke says: "On the basis of these findings, our team proposed a cognitive model for OOBE relating them to failure of integration of proprioceptive, tactile, and visual information of one's body (personal space)."

Let me try to say this in simple language. In a normal state, we know exactly where we are in relation to our body and surroundings. We sense ourselves as being inside our physical body.

When we think or sense ourselves to be out of our body, that is because there is an interference or anomaly in our sense of where we are in relation to our surrounding. We seem to think we are outside our body but actually we are not. In other words, neuroscientists think OOBE is merely a hallucination.

Because science has no knowledge of the astral body, its characteristics or powers, it creates a model based merely on physiological and neurological evidence.

Contradictions

But certain facts contradict this. If OOBE is merely hallucination or a neural defect, how come there are people who see the astral body or etheric double of someone having an OOBE? Sometimes the astral body is seen very far from the physical body of the sleeping person. If a theory contradicts a proven fact or experience, something's wrong with the theory.

Some scientists propose the most incredible theories just to maintain their own assumptions about the nature of physical reality. For example, one scientific theory on why natives of Fiji, Indonesia, Brazil, India and the Philippines are able to walk on fire is: "The natives have developed very powerful sweat glands on their feet, so that when they touch the burning charcoal or fire they are activated, thus cushioning the effects of the fire. The sweat glands cool the fire and therefore enable them to walk easily on it."

It would be nice if proponents of this theory tried walking barefooted on fire to test their theory.

Despite its obvious inadequacy (I walked on fire without getting hurt, although I don't have thick sweat glands), the theory is accepted by most scientists.

Near-death experience

Another phenomenon whose scientific explanation does not jibe with facts is near-death experience (NDE). In a typical NDE, as studied by Dr. Raymond Moody, a person is pronounced clinically dead. In that state, the person sees himself traveling through a tunnel with a bright light at the end. He moves toward the light, usually seen as a being who asks him questions.

The being of light tells him it's not yet his time and to go back to earth. He wakes up feeling the pain of an accident if it is an accident or labor pains, etc. Then his/ her life is transformed. He feels a sense of mission and exhibits previously absent psychic powers.

Scientists working with experimental pilots in Canada have a different explanation. They think NDE is caused by a lack of oxygen in the brain.

When pilots are in a rotating machine, the centrifugal force temporarily deprives the brain of oxygen. Pilots lose consciousness and get a sensation of floating or being out of the body and going through a tunnel where a seemingly being of light tells them it is not yet their time and they have to go back. They wake up remembering every detail of the incident, like in a typical NDE.

But there's one big difference. Pilots who experience this do not develop a sense of mission, neither do they acquire a new insight into their life. They are not transformed like those with actual NDE and do not develop psychic powers. These facts are ignored by scientists.

E-mail jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph. Visit website at www.angelfire.com/journal/licauco

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THE BODY SHOP
A Romantic Cruise to Remember
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Experience at sea
Every P500 single receipt purchase entitles you to a raffle coupon to "A Romantic Cruise to Remember" Promo is from November 1 2004 to January 31 2005. See posters or log on to www.yehey.com for details
WELCOME ABOARD
Let The Body Shop, Star Cruises, Mega and Meg take you on your dream cruise
Awake to the early morning breeze of the ocean as you relax in solitude and rediscover your life's most exhilarating moments
Come visit at
STAR CRUISES MEGA meg INQUIRER

Take a 'Happy Walk' Feb. 6

THE DOWN Syndrome Association of the Philippines is holding "Happy Walk" Feb. 6 around the Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City, to kick off the annual observance of the National Down Syndrome Consciousness Month.

Similar activities will be held simultaneously in Cebu and Davao cities.

Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman will lead the walk in Manila. Participants will include people with Down Syndrome, volunteers, doctors, therapists, teachers, students, parents, movie and sports personalities.

Registration will begin at 6 a.m.

A brief program and fellowship will follow at Elephant World.

Other activities lined up during the month include golf tournament, free medical and dental clinic, and other sports events.

It is estimated that one child with the syndrome is born every two hours in the Philippines. But parents often do not know how to provide proper care and where to get much-needed medical attention for the children.

The Philippines has some 100,000 children with Down Syndrome. The Down Syndrome Association of the Philippines (DSAP) seeks to encourage acceptance by the community of people with the disability and help secure for them education and employment. It also tries to educate people on the disability to dispel fear, promote understanding, and help parents allow their children to lead normal lives.

Everyone with Down Syndrome, who knows someone who does or just wants to support the cause is invited to join "Happy Walk." For more information about the event and other activities and services for individuals with Down Syndrome, call:

Down Syndrome Association of the Philippines Inc., 2/F 6372 Agrifina Building, Camia corner Meleguas Streets, Guadalupe Viejo, Makati City; tel. 8959642 or 8953606, e-mail dsapi@hotmail.com and website: http://downsyndrome.org.ph.

DSAPI-Davao Branch Office c/o ANFLOCOR, Damosa Complex, Lanang Commercial Center, Davao City, Telefax: (82)2342280

DSAPI-Cebu Branch Office c/o Juanito King Foundation Inc., 8/F Cebu Holdings Center, Cebu Business Park, Cebu City, tel. (032)2326061, fax: (032)2326063

Affiliate member: Bacolod, c/o Child's Play (034)4336441, 4341734

Free cataract surgeries

THE PHILIPPINE Academy of Ophthalmology (PAO) marks its 60th year Jan. 26 with the theme "Opening Eyes, Uplifting Lives."

PAO will conduct 60,000 free cataract surgeries all over the country, starting with missions at the Quezon Institute, E. Rodriguez, 8 a.m. tomorrow.

THE ROXAS and Areilza clan: Enrique Areilza with his mother, Pilar Roxas Areilza; her son Iñigo A.; Gina Tambunting with her husband Pedro Roxas; Juan Areilza, husband of Pilar, and his son Eduardo

SISTERS Two with their loves: Stephanie Zubiri with her fiancé, Frenchman Victor Delfour; with Bea Zubiri Banon and her American husband, Scott Banon

SINAI and Sigalit Djemal with Regina Garcia and her sons Coco and Cardo G.

PHILIPPINE Tatler's Chit Lijauco with her close pals, businessman Munchoy Garcia, his wife Reiko and son Raymond Garcia

TOGETHERNESS: John Cariño with his sister Micki, their father Tito Cariño of Fairways and Blue Waters and daughter Cheska

FUN Pack. Anna Safir with Carina Sarfati, one-of-a-kind Louie Cruz and young restaurateur Mike Sandro Rieta

ABE and Nini Licaros with Ma. Ria Pineda, who is vacationing from New York; Maritess Tantoco and her husband, international businessman Renato Enriquez

Bora gives spectacular welcome to 2005

PEARL of the Pacific royals: Greg Sanson, with his wife Marilou Tirol and the princess of the Pearl, Rita T. Sanson

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** using **Kodak Easy Share System**

AHH, the gorgeous, unbeatable Boracay countdown 2005 was the most fabulous happening on the island, *palanggas*. There was a tidal wave of people, people, and more people from Cosmo Manille and Cebu's creamiest set.

The hottest action on New Year's Eve was at the Big 4—Pearl of the Pacific Resort and Spa, Waling Waling, the breezy Seawind and Friday's.

The Pearl, "No. 1 choice of lovers" and which has the widest beach, hosted one of the most fun parties. At the front row, a few steps from the shore, ABS-CBN publishing's **Ernie Lopez** and preggy-with-twins wife, Southern belle **Geena**, and son **Blade**; **Tet Lara** and vivacious beauty **Pinky Amador**; **Rosary Ysmael** and **Chunchay Sarfati** watched the burst of spectacular colors in the sky. Hawaii-raised good-looking **Gary Glaubermann** had eyes only for the sexy and young.

Better than NY

Internationally renowned New York-based culinary instructor **Lorrie Reynoso**, who jets in from the Big Apple every year and stays at the Pearl, agreed that not even New York could compete with the unique experience of welcoming the new year on the island.

Gov. **Bong Marcos** and his attractive, brilliant wife, lawyer **Lisa Araneta**, with their three handsome sons, were on their second New Year visit, *palanggas*.

Svelte, brilliant Philippine Tatler asset, **Chit Lijauco**, with her daughter **Cindy** and husband **Bill Covery**, and Chit's son, **Mark Macapagal**, with special pal **Patricia Joson**, enjoyed the dazzling evening with Pearl owners and *tres* gracious and amiable hosts, our *palangga* **Greg Sanson**; his wife, vibrant **Marilou Tirol**; their good-looking son **Albert** and his wife, also a Southern gal, **Therese Ortiz**; and their *tres* good-looking grandsons **Nio** and **Shawn**.

Civilized people

Forever stunning **Vivian Velez** looked so happy with current husband **Sam Groskogf** and ex **Tuvia**, with their handsome sons **Patrick** and **Daniel**. Now, *palanggas*, that's what being civilized is all about, *di bala*?

Countdown music—sounds from the Beatles to original Pilipino music—was provided by the swinging Sold Out Band. The show was hosted by **Charlie Ysmael**. Invitees raved about the exotic paradise buffet prepared by top chef **Tony Castro**.

No one worried about hangover because the Pearl of the Pacific had the popular Neo Spa that offered a perfect view of the ocean. Believe me, *palanggas*, after a Lymphatic Drainage Massage, which everyone raves about, you need not worry about the Boracay tricycle ride that feels like being inside an osterizer because of rough roads.

No one also seemed to worry about the future of Boracay despite the tourist invasion. At least not **Louie Cruz** who, when I asked if he was concerned about the island's future, replied: "Tourists can never ruin an island. The only ones who can destroy paradise are (residents) and those who do business... and also if and when corruption in local government exists because zoning will be drastically affected. It happened to Baguio and Puerto Galera. The tourists packed, left and moved on. I hope Bora will not become paradise lost one day."

At the Waling-Waling, owners Dr. **Orlando Sakay** and his wife **Jasmin** hosted 150 guests that enjoyed the fab band Cool Grey from Iloilo and the singing of the children.

Die-hard Waling-Waling client, Bukidnon Gov. **Joe Zubiri**, brought his entire *famille* to spend New Year in Bora. He even went around collecting donations for the children's books and supplies this coming school. Not bad huh?

Two resorts down, 280 guests were elbow to elbow at Seawind where champagne and wine flowed, thanks to the superb hosting of that tireless, hardworking perfectionist, Rep. **Tony Boy Floirendo**, no less.

The Guarana band pumped up the beat with Latin swing and salsa numbers, while southern gentleman **JM Rodriguez** sang "Fallin."

Hotshots having a blast included former Miss Universe **Margie Moran Floirendo**, who was having a ball with **Peng** and **Vicky Perez de Tagle**; **Ritchie** and **Giging Garcia**, with their good-looking sons; **Johnny Velasquez** and **Maripi Muscat**.

Birthday celebration

St. Luke's medical director Dr. **Joven Cuanang** blew the candle on his birthday cake, with **Andy Estella**.

Naturellement, **Sonny Tanchanco**, with his handsome **JP** and **Bryan**, together with **John Gaddi**, grabbed the ladies' tanned arms and sizzled on the dance floor. Dashing Greek Dr. **George Sarakinis** swept the dance empress, a radiant **Becky Garcia**, into his arms, in a prelude to their forthcoming wedding in Athens, Greece.

Gov. **Chavit Singson** was with his gang and the gorgeous **Che S.** Also there were **Iñigo** and **Maricris Zobel**.

Super pals, Aguila Glass' **Rante Aguila** and Asian Spirit's chair **Noel Oñate**, ever the gentlemen that they were, graciously toasted glam girls **Jessica Guevarra**, vivaciously fun **Carminia Pavia** and **Jeannie Goulbourn**.

Kenji Onglao, gorgeously tanned **Carlo Garcia** and **Marco Lobregat**, now based in Barcelona, charmed all the gentxt gals.

At the strike of midnight, the whole coastline of Bora became the backdrop for a spectacular, multicolored pyrotechnics show. It looked like all the resorts were competing for the best display. It was absolutely breathtakingly awesome, *palanggas*.

Pearl of the Pacific jumped the gun by starting their fab fireworks 15 minutes before midnight. Needless to say, they had the best show in the skies that night.

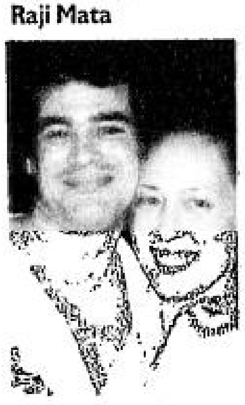
AT DOS Amigos Resto before New Year's Eve. Super host of the Seawind bash Rep. Tony Boy Floirendo, architect Anton Mendoza, gorgeous Carol Garcia and Carla Tengco; (standing) Vicky Zubiri, Maricris Z., Mario Borao and Sigalit Djemal

CJ Jaravata, Sael Popsie, Josh Lee and Hazel Espinosa

Quint Fansler with Wendy and Tony Hotung and Derrick Chiongbian

DJs David Jacob and Raji Mata

GORGEOUS sisters two: bag designer Bea Valdez and her sister Marga V.



JUAMPI and Laura Bertoto

ULTRA glam Vicky Zubiri and former Manille model, now Madrid student, Alex Scot

PARTYING dudes: A.J. with Michael and Martin Manotoc at the Seawind

GANG of three: Tet Lara with Pinky Amador and Geena Lopez at the Pearl of the Pacific

LAWYER Liza Araneta Marcos with Boracay regulars, Maricris and Iñigo Zobel

CLOSE pals: Rita Sanson and D'Boy Tuofeo

WHAT a party! Gov. Bongbong Marcos, with TV's hot glam gal Ces Drilon

VICKY Z., Geoff Rodriguez, Joey Z. and Marc Nelson

ALL in the family: Margie Floirendo with her niece Diana Moran; Philip Mombiot with his daughter Nathalie M.; Margie's sister, Lulette Mombiot; Lorrie Reynoso and Al Tengco

PRETTY young gals: Marge Gilinsky and Anna Safir at the Pearl

ENTERTAINMENT Metro

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Samantha's back, and she's turned from sweet to soulful

FAMILY FIRST. Her children and husband Rino will always come first for Samantha even if she does miss singing.

By Marinel R. Cruz

SAMANTHA Chavez, a popular singer in the '90s who is now a full-time wife and mother, admits that she now misses singing once in a while.

"That's why I've been singing in our church," said Samantha, an active member of the Victory Christian Fellowship Church. "I also teach and participate in many of our activities. I've learned so many things about God and life, and now I just want to share these with people."

Samantha has come up with an inspirational music album, which "speaks about life, forgiveness and how you handle life."

The self-titled album contains 12 tracks, two of which—"You Are the Love of God" and "Thank You Lord"—were written by Samantha herself.

"It's an everyday goal for me to come up with something for the Lord," Samantha told INQUIRER Entertainment. "I just want an album that's positive, an album with songs that are wholesome, something that I can proudly pass on to my children."

Jungee Marcelo, the album's co-producer and creative consultant, said Samantha's album is a "reflection of her musicality."

"It is very soulful, and a big chunk of this mirrors her deep black influence," explained Jungee, who contributed five songs to the album—"Let Me Fly," "Give Cry a Try," "Love Me Right Now," "Dahil Ikaw" and "All for the Glory."

"Samantha is very professional," said Jungee. "We didn't have a hard time recording her songs, because when she arrived at the studio, she already knew the songs by heart."

"I used to sing sweet songs," said Samantha. "People will hear a different Samantha in this album. Jungee's soul influence helped me adjust from sweet to soulful."

Samantha said it took her three years to finish the album. One of the reasons was that she got pregnant and gave birth to her second child, Marcie Grace, now a year old, when she was in the process of recording her songs.

"Jungee had been very patient with me," Samantha said. "It's also a good thing that we weren't pressured by deadlines because we're both part of Marquee Music, which produced this album. Quality-wise, we're very proud of this album."

Side A Band's Joey Benin also came up with "Trust the Rainbow" for the album.

So did Richelle Ligot who composed "Your Love is Sufficient," Michael Turner who wrote "Tears," and Paul Armesin who pitched in "Beyond Forever."

But for Samantha, family still comes first. "I've seen artists who jeopardized their relationships with their families because of their work. I'm not like that."

Samantha said she "let go of show biz" when she married businessman Rino Que in 1994 and later gave birth to her eldest child, Mark Allen, now 8 years old.

She first met Rino in 1991, through TV director Leo Katigbak, on the set of the late-night program "Oh No, It's Johnny!"

Soul diva Kuh Ledesma paved the way for Samantha to become a solo artist. Samantha, along with Rica Arambulo, Viktoria and Lyon Roque, had auditioned to be part of one of Kuh's concerts at the Music Museum.

Samantha recorded a couple of albums that spawned hits. She also brought honor to the country when she won the grand prize in the International Midnight Sun Song Festival in Lahti, Finland, in 1994, and at the 7th Asean Songfest in Jogjakarta, Indonesia.

Her debut album, "From the Heart," from Universal Records, produced hit ballads like "Pakiusap Ko" and "Nagkataon, Nagkatagpo."

"My husband and children come before anything else," said Samantha. "I have my husband's full support."

DISTINCT AND DIFFERENT are the singing styles of Rannie (left) and Lance Raymundo, gushes their manager.

'No contest here, only pure entertainment'

By Remy Umerez
Contributor

RANNIE Raymundo stressed that his pre-Valentine show with his brother, Lance, is not a contest.

"I sincerely hope that [the audience] would not [pit us against each other]," said Rannie. "This is not a contest. We aim to entertain and not compete with each other."

The hard part, he said, is in choosing the songs they would sing in "Main Event II," which will be held on Feb. 3 at the Music Museum.

Determining the duets to be sung by male singers is not an easy task, Rannie explained.

"To solve the problem, I asked Lance to submit 10 songs we would sing together, and I had my own list," he said. "We narrowed it down to five after a thorough discussion with our musical director.

"It was easier for us to choose the songs we would be singing to our special guest, VJ Karel Marquez. There are so many songs to choose from, and all of them are crowd pleasers. We hope to come up with our version of 'My Funny Valentine.'"

Love feast

Angie Magbanua, the show's overall director and manager of the Raymundo brothers, promised a love feast in "Main Event II."

She said the show is not a repeat of the previous "Main Event," staged last November.

"It will be much, much more," said Angie. "We are targeting Valentine, and the repertoire will definitely be romantic and special.

"The brothers have a singing style so distinct and yet so different, but when they sing together, their musical chemistry is so solid and beautiful that people can never get enough," the brothers' manager gushed.

Providing the show a sensual feel is Solid Gold Dancers, and Alcs Porras' stunning costumes, according to Angie.

Ric Mercado returns as musical director.

Various projects await the brothers after "Main Event II."

For Rannie, it will be back to TV with the re-launch of the magazine show "Hard Hat."

'ORM'

He has also completed recording 24 tracks or a double CD featuring old and new compositions and hopes to find a recording outfit that would be interested in distributing it, according to Rannie.

"I am bringing back the sound of the '80s with this project," he said. "I am also introducing the ORM series or Original Rannie Music.

"In my future shows I will pay tribute to OPM music, too," he added. "We must all be proud of our Filipino heritage."

Lance wants to concentrate on his music more than anything else.

"I am good boy now," he claimed. "I haven't been dating anyone since Christmas. My mind is filled with the musical artistry that I want to achieve this year. The [audience] reception to my shows has been good."

He said he would keep his shaggy look, which has become his trademark since his comeback concert last September. Women also find this look extremely sexy, he thinks.

Special request

But Lance will leave this April for a photo shoot in Los Angeles, California, with international fashion photographer Tobin, executive director of Studio M521. Tobin has photographed some of the most beautiful people in the world.

Tobin is said to have requested for Lance to be the subject of his upcoming project.

In preparation for the shoot, Lance is undergoing extreme physical training and is into sports like soccer and surfing.

He will also begin work on his second album for Viva Records.

Lance said he also wants to establish himself as a solo light rock per-

NO CONTEST/2

'Voice of Asia' Ladine now heard at Merk's

SHOW TIME

GERALDINE "Ladine" Olazo Roxas is a young diva in the making.

Ladine was born in Limay, Bataan, and studied at the College of the Holy Spirit, Manila. As early as when she was 5, she started singing in school programs and in variety shows, and doing so all the way to college.

She won in many amateur singing contests, but her first real break came when she was offered singing engagements in venues in Beijing. She got fantastic audience reactions in China.

Her career took off when award-winning composer Vehnee Saturno spotted her in one of her performances in a club in Manila. She signed a management contract with Vehnee and a recording offer soon followed.

Her debut album, "Meant to Be," was released by Star Records.

The young woman with the extraordinary voice received the Grand Prix at the "Voice Asia" song competition, besting 17 other contestants from around the world. The contest took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in the summer of 2001.

Ladine sang the theme song "Anong Daling Sabihin (How Easy to Say)" of the critically acclaimed "Bulaklak ng Maynila," the Best Picture in a Metro Manila Film Festival. The song itself was voted the "Best Theme Song" by the MMFF as well as the Film Academy of the Philippines.

Ladine is the first Filipino artist to break into the European music market, through the album "How Can I Make You Love Me?" released on the Zone 7 label for Candid Records Philippines Corp.

The album also showcases Ladine's songwriting skills. She composed four of the songs with the collaboration of her producer, Saturno.

The album is the first R&B project of Candid under Zone 7.

Also featured in the album are songs written by Carl Dimataga of Australia and Stefano Musitano of Sweden.

The album was recorded and mixed in Sydney, Australia, and mastered in Studio City, Los Angeles.

Ladine was received warmly and enthusiastically in Barcelona, Berlin, Dublin and Monaco. She has performed for over 60,000 people in the UK alone, in appearances in London, Stoke-on-Tent, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Nescastle Upon Tyne, Manchester, Liverpool, Scarborough, Birmingham and Glasgow.

Ladine is back in her native land to promote her album. The first single off the album, "Di Maiisip," went as high as the eighth spot in the countdown charts last year.

Catch Ladine Roxas at Merk's Bar Bistro all Mondays of January. Call 7574720 or 7574721 for reservation.

FROM LIMAY, Bataan, Ladine Roxas is winning her way to many parts of the world.

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AREA ONE THIS SIDE OF TOWN
Wednesdays are crowd nights at Hard Rock Café in Makati when Area One sings Beatles hits to the delight of romantics of all ages. Composed of veteran TV director Bert de Leon, noted violinist John Lesaca, professional musicians and businessmen Cash Manalang and Roy Marindu, Area One is a new company of old friends who got together to reminisce on the good old days through music. Based on the big crowds turning up every Wednesday, Hard Rock GM Proceso Calison says an extension is likely. Hard Rock Café, which turned 9 recently, announces this month's lineup: Prime Council on Mondays; Circus on Tuesdays; Area One and Retrospect on Wednesdays; Rage on Thursdays; Mocha on Fridays; Fat Session on Saturdays, and The Boss on Sundays. All shows start at 9:30 p.m. Hard Rock Café is on the 3rd level of Glorietta 3, Ayala Center, Makati City.

New 'Wild Card' season gets wilder

CHRIS POTTER and Joely Fisher in "Wild Card"

JOELY Fisher is back as the quirky fraud investigator Zoe Busiek for another season of "Wild Card," every Tuesday at 9 p.m. on Star World.

In the new season, more danger is just one of the several changes. Fisher assures this sequel will be getting wilder. Executive producer Douglas Steinberg said there's also new emphasis on the case-of-the-week stories being "about bigger issues you might see in the headlines."

But the show still plays up what has been referred to as its "Moonlighting" qualities—the banter between Busiek and Lennox.

Busiek still has to juggle the demands of her work with those of being a mother to three children she inherited when her sister was killed in a car accident.

While investigating her sister's death, Zoe never quite plays by the rules, especially on the job, even when her handsome super-sleuthing co-worker, Dan Lennox (Chris Potter), tries to keep her on the straight and narrow. He has the book smarts and goes by the rules, while she is street smart and bends the rules.

Along with their new boss, M. Pearl McGuire (Loretta Devine), the team tracks down and exposes crazy cases of all kinds based on real-life events.

The episodes divide their time between the mystery/investigation cases and the domestic front trials and tribulations of the heroine dealing with the school and social problems of the children.

Tune in to "Wild Card" on Star World every Tuesday at 9 p.m. and Wednesday at 12:30 a.m., 3:30 am and 12 noon.

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'No contest here...'

From page 1

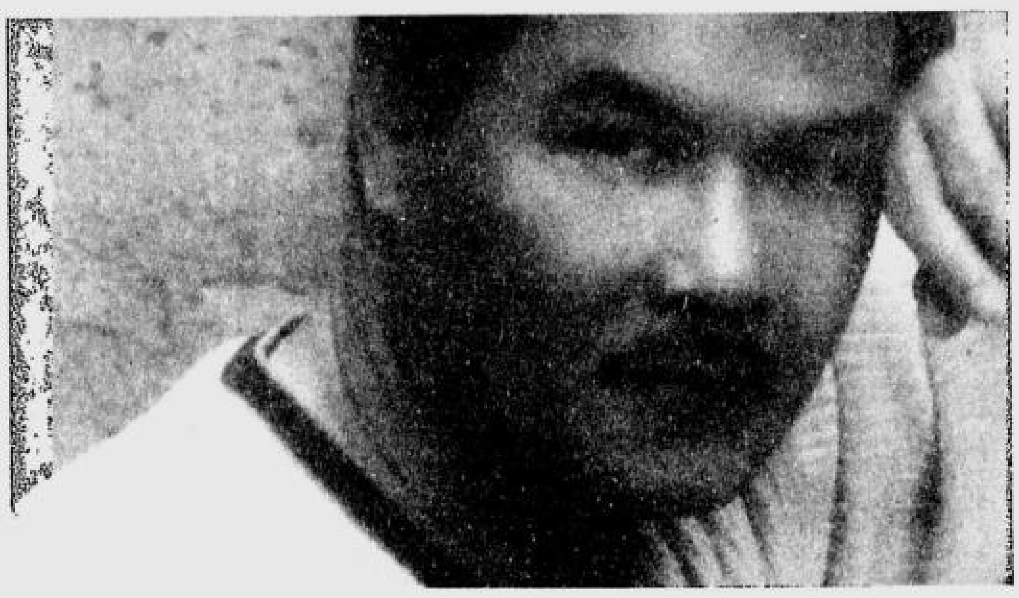
former in the local music scene.

Part of ticket sales of "Main Event II" will go to the Bantay Bata 163 Foundation.

"Main Event II" is presented by Skilz Salon, Café Ysabel, New Bombay Food Inc., Cardinal Audio, Bravo Restaurant, Audiophile, Belo Medical Group, Gloria Maris Restaurant, Lucy Britanico Salon, Odyssey Record Bar and 91.5 Energy FM.

Tickets are available at all Ticketworld branches and at Music Museum. For more information, call Mariza, 9510493-94 or 0919-3388489.

Ray Ann Fuentes talks on 'Principles of God's Economics' in free seminar



FUENTES

THIS text message must have touched our hearts one way or another: "I've opened an acct 4 u at d Universal Bank of GOD's Blessings & deposited billions of days, full of love, joy & happiness. Enjoy spending!"

A friend who might have had a major financial problem would have felt relieved upon reading this. Who are we to question God's reasons for letting us experience a little difficulty in money matters anyway? Thanks to the sender, the recipient must have been reminded that there's more to be thankful for in this life, and God has grand plans to enrich our lives, not only with money.

This, in a nutshell, is what singer Ray Ann Fuentes will tackle when he conducts a seminar on the "Principles of God's Economics" on Feb. 8 and 9, 6:30 p.m., at the Word For The World Christian Fellowship in Makati City.

"This is a free seminar aimed at teaching Christians on God's plans to bless each one of us but at the same time, how we should be responsible stewards of God's blessings," says Fuentes.

Participants will be able to know and understand how God's economy works and how they can become gracious stewards of His blessings. "They will realize that God's kingdom has a 'system' different from the world's 'economy.' They will only learn the true meaning of prosperity when they begin to wholeheartedly accept God's word."

Fuentes says true blessings come when we start to accept that whatever riches we have on this earth are not ours to keep. "They are still God's," says Ray Ann. "But what we do with money, which is a blessing from Him, could be an indicator of whether we could be saved or not."

Fuentes will also hold a fund-raising concert on Feb. 11 for the rehabilitation of the Word for World sanctuary. Tickets for P500, P200 and P100 are available at the Word for the World Christian Fellowship located at ACCm Bldg., 102 Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City.

For inquiries, call Emma Baesa at 819-0606.

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

KUNG FU HUSTLE PG13 1:25,3:35,5:45,7:55,10:05	OCEAN'S TWELVE PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:15	MEET THE FOCKERS PG13 1140,2:05,4:30,6:55,9:20
BLADE TRINITY R13 12:50,3:10 MEET THE FOCKERS PG13 5:10,7:35,10:00	WHITE NOISE PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	MEET THE FOCKERS PG13 1:00,3:25,5:50,8:15,10:40

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3 Uno	1 Katawan Mo Langit Ko	1 Spirit of the Glass
4 The Fockers	2 Mad House	2 Along Came Polly
5 White Noise	3 Kung Fu Hustle	
	4 Uno	
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12:10 2:30 4:20 4:50 6:40 7:10 9:00 9:30
WHITE NOISE
1:20 3:55 6:30 9:05
MADHOUSE
12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00
OCEAN'S TWELVE
1:30 4:10 6:50 9:30
KUNG FU HUSTLE
12:10 2:35 4:55 7:15 9:35
BLADE : TRINITY
12:05 2:25 4:45 7:05 9:25

ALI MALL CINEMAS

1	Dolby	MEET THE FOCKERS 1:05 3:25 5:45 8:05
2	SDDS	WHITE NOISE 12:35 3:10 5:45 8:20
3	dts	BLADE: TRINITY 11:10 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:20
4	Dolby	UNO 1:10 3:35 6:00 8:25
5	Dolby	KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 8:40

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1	MEET THE FOCKERS 11:00, 1:40, 4:20, 7:00, 9:40 PG-13
2	MEET THE FOCKERS 11:30, 2:10, 4:50 7:30, 10:10 PG-13
3	KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:00, 1:25, 3:50 6:15, 8:40, 11:00 PG-13
4	WHITE NOISE 11:00, 1:25, 3:50 6:15, 8:40, 11:00 GP

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CINEMA 1	WHITE NOISE 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00 PG13	CINEMA 2	MEET THE FOCKERS 11:00, 1:45, 4:25, 7:05, 9:50 PG13

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SHANG CINEPLEX

① MEET THE FOCKERS
FS 10:40AM, 1:10PM, 3:40PM, 6:10PM, LMF 8:40PM (PG - 13)

② MEET THE FOCKERS
FS 12:00PM, 2:30PM, 5:00PM, 7:30PM, LMF 10:00PM (PG - 13)

③ WHITE NOISE
FS 12:20PM, 2:45PM, 5:10PM, 7:35PM, LMF 10:00PM (PG-13)

④ OCEAN'S TWELVE
12:40PM LMF 5:40PM (PG - 13)
BLADE TRINITY
10:20AM, 3:20PM, LMF 8:20PM (R-13)

PREMIERE THEATRE KUNG FU HUSTLE
FS 12:20PM, 2:45PM, 5:10PM, 7:35PM, LMF 10:00PM (PG-13)
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• METRO MANILA CINEMAS •

GALLERIA 632-9115/16

1 MEET THE FOCKERS • THX 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00	6 BLADE TRINITY 11:50 2:20 4:50 7:20 9:50
2 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:30 2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30	7 MAD HOUSE 10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
3 WHITE NOISE 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	8 BATH HOUSE 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	9 RAISE YOUR VOICE 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00
5 OCEAN'S TWELVE 11:00 1:45 4:30 7:15 10:00	10 NATIONAL TREASURE 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 MEET THE FOCKERS	10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
2 MAD HOUSE 11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50	5 BLADE TRINITY 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 OCEAN'S TWELVE 11:10 1:50 4:30 7:10 9:50	6 RESERVE
4 WHITE NOISE 10:35 12:50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50	7 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45

METRO EAST 682-8193/99 • 682-8280

1 TWO BROTHERS 10:40 12:45 2:50 4:55 7:00 9:10	5 MEET THE FOCKERS 11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 8:30 10:30
2 BLADE TRINITY 10:40 1:10 3:50 6:30 9:10	6 OCEAN'S TWELVE 10:35 1:05 3:35 6.05 8:20 10:30
3 RAISE YOUR VOICE 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00	7 KUNG FU HUSTLE 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30
4 MAD HOUSE 10:50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00	8 WHITE NOISE 12.30 3:00 5.30 8.00 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 MEET THE FOCKERS 10:20 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25	5 KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55
2 OCEAN'S TWELVE 11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25	6 WHITE NOISE 11:15 1:20 3:20 5:10 7:00 8:55
3 RAISE YOUR VOICE 12:00 2:10 4:10 6:10 8:30	7 IN SEARCH OF AN IMPOTENT MAN 12:00 2:10 4:10 6:10 8:25
4 BLADE TRINITY 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25	8 NATIONAL TREASURE 1:00 3:30 6:00 8:30

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February 9-15	NOVALICHES
February 16-22	ANGELES
Feb. 23 - Mar. 1	IMUS
March 02 - 08	LIPA
March 09 - 15	PIONEER
March 16 - 22	ERMITA

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MTRCB Rating: R-18

PIONEER 687-5378

1 WHITE NOISE 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10	3 MEET THE FOCKERS 10:30 1:00 3:30 6:00 8:30
2 BLADE TRINITY 11:40 2:10 4:40 7:10 9:10	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 11:30 1:50 4.10 6:30 8:50

Citisquare MALABON 288-0985 / 2575

1 HONEY 10:55 12:50 2:45 4:40 6:35 8:30	3 OCEAN'S TWELVE 10:50 1:15 3:40 6:05 8:30
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER 11:10 1:30 3:50 6:10 8:30	4 SUPERBABIES 11:20 1:10 3:00 4:50 6:40 8:30

CAINTA 240-4661

1 BLADE TRINITY 12:10 2:50 5:30 8:10	3 WHITE NOISE 10:55 1:25 3:55 6:25 8:55
2 MEET THE FOCKERS 12:40 3:20 6:00 8:40	4 KUNG FU HUSTLE 10:55 1:25 3:55 6:25 8:55

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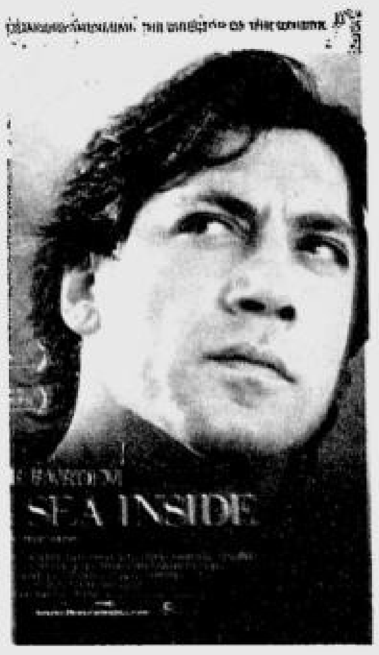

JAVIER BARDEM

SHOW STOPPER

BANGKOK—The Spanish movie "The Sea Inside" added to its growing list of honors the Best Picture and Best Actor trophies from the Bangkok International Film Festival on Friday.

The Alejandro Amenabar film, based on the real-life story of a tetraplegic battling to end his life, had already won Best Foreign-Language Movie at Hollywood's Golden Globe awards last week while lead actor Javier Bardem was also named Best Actor at the Venice Film Festival.

Neither Amenabar nor Bardem was present to receive their Golden Kinnaree awards at the ceremony, taking place under the shadow of last month's tsunami disaster which killed more than 5,000 people in Thailand and nearly 220,000 across Asia.

The Best Actress citation was shared by Annette Bening for "Being Julia" and Ana Geislerova ("Zelary"), while American director Joel Schumacher ("Falling Down," "The Phantom of the Opera") won a Lifetime Achievement Award.

France's Christophe Barratier ("Les Choristes") and Korea's Park Chan-chook ("Old Boy") shared honors for Best Screenplay.

Hollywood luminaries Michael Douglas, Jeremy Irons and Miranda Richardson were among the guests, while Belgian action star Jean-Claude Van Damme, immaculate in a white suit and accompanied by his son, was also present.

Hong Kong director Wong Kar-Wai ("Happy Together," "In the Mood for Love," "2046") also received an award for promoting Asian cinema.

"It's a great honor. I want to share this with my Thai colleagues," said Wong.

Thai director Vichit Kounavudhi, who died in 1997, was awarded a posthumous Golden Kinnaree, the trophy named after a half-woman, half-bird mythical Thai creature.

Welcome spotlight

The BIFF has drawn welcome attention to Thailand, shining a spotlight on its movie industry and attracting revenue to supplement its tourist sector.

Alongside the festival, whose third edition wraps up today, runs a successful film market that organizers launched last year.

The market opened on Monday and closed on Friday. It was set in the five-star Shangri-La hotel, where festival-goers were feted and filmmakers held press conferences, creating an ideal mixing ground for the two events.

"It is already a smash hit, we have more than tripled attendance over last year and have three times as many firms exhibiting," said market director Christine Rush.

"The final tally of exhibitors is passing 300, compared with just 100 in January last year," she said. "Our film market crowd include the business sorts who actually make the movies happen: producers, attorneys, bankers and development executives."

Thailand's big assets include its high-quality digital animation teams, production capacity and magnificent natural scenery.

"The Beach" starring Leonardo DiCaprio, or more recently Oliver Stone's "Alexander" were both largely filmed in this country famous for its lush islands and stunning coast.

"Thailand is one destination that film crews immediately say 'yes' to," said Ian Smith, producer of "Alexander."

In 2004, more than $100 million of contracts were negotiated in Bangkok. "That figure should easily pass $250 million this year," said Rush.

Apart from its remarkable scenery, Thailand has also developed important post-production infrastructure to lure filmmakers. *AFP*

'Elektra' perfect fit for perfectly fit Garner

REVIEW

NEW YORK—Blissfully Ben Affleck-free, the "Daredevil" spin-off "Elektra" benefits greatly from the presence of Jennifer Garner, who steps from the shadows of Hell's Kitchen rooftops into the spotlight of her own butt-kicking chick flick.

In fact, you'd never know that "Daredevil" ever came out in 2003 from watching this movie, and that's a good thing. No one needs to revisit the male half of Bennifer saving Manhattan in head-to-toe red leather (even Affleck himself would probably rather forget that he did it).

So now the focus is on Garner, who already has proved herself the ideal action figure from her star-making role on TV's "Alias." Playing Elektra, the Marvel Comics warrior princess, is a perfect fit for the perfectly fit actress. When she saunters across a room in a red lace-up bustier and low-slung red leather pants, her long, brown hair swirling wildly in the artificial wind, it makes absolute sense—we see her do this every week. Elektra could be just another of the many disguises Sydney Bristow dons before destroying someone who has underestimated her.

She makes "Elektra" so surprisingly effective, it could open doors for other female action heroines. Halle Berry looked fantastic last year in "Catwoman," but it was hard to take her seriously in a stinker of a movie. Michelle Yeoh and Zhang Ziyi were gorgeous and deadly in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," but that was an ensemble film also featuring male warriors. And the women of the "Charlie's Angels" movies can't compare because their tongues were firmly planted in their cheeks while they were kicking bad guys in the face.

But Garner's charms extend beyond the mere physical. Simply by showing up, she makes "Elektra" far more entertaining than it has a right to be. Yes, she's smart and sexy and strong, but as she showed last year in the comedy "13 Going on 30," she also has a girl-next-door likability that makes her seem accessible. So when Elektra says to her mentor, a blind martial arts expert named Stick (Terence Stamp), "You talk in riddles, old man," she makes the line tolerable, and not laugh-out-loud corny.

Let's back up a second, though: If you did see "Daredevil," you'll recall that Elektra, the girlfriend of blind lawyer/crimefighter Matt Murdock, died at the end. (If you didn't see it, we just ruined the ending for you. Sorry!) The magical, mystical Stick resurrected the orphaned Elektra, and she now lives a solitary existence as a highly trained, highly paid assassin. ("It's what I'm good at," she responds flatly when asked why this is her chosen profession.)

ALIAS Sydney Bristow, Garner in her own butt-kicking chick flick

> Forget Affleck. When she saunters across a room in a red lace-up bustier and low-slung red leather pants, it makes absolute sense

In the script from Zak Penn ("X2"), Stuart Zicherman and Raven Metzner, directed by longtime "X-Files" director Mark Bowman, Elektra's latest assignment is to take out Mark Miller (Goran Visnjic) and his 13-year-old daughter, Abby (Kirsten Prout). The reclusive Elektra had just met them, sharing a shy Christmas dinner while renting a house on a quiet island.

What she didn't know was that they were hiding from The Hand, a secret group with dark powers. They're after Abby, who (like Elektra) is a martial-arts prodigy and who (like Elektra) lost her mother at a young age. Elektra finds herself fighting to protect the father and daughter instead of killing them, and Abby becomes sort of her Mini-Me. (Though Prout, a young actress with endless confidence and charisma in her first major movie, resembles a young Renee Zellweger.)

In telling their story, Bowman seems to be borrowing from everything, from the slo-mo gothic aesthetic of a Guns N' Roses video to the dazzling outdoor fight sequences of "House of Flying Daggers." Elektra's signature sword travels magically through row after row of a topiary labyrinth until it squarely pierces its intended target, and ninjas drop from the trees like spiders dangling from freshly spun webs.

There's also a heavy amount of philosophical mumbo-jumbo about The Way, most of which comes from Stick. "You understand violence and pain but you do not know The Way," he advises Elektra. Again, that line would have sounded ridiculous coming out of most actors' mouths, but Stamp (the star of Steven Soderbergh's "The Limey," among other films) has such a formidable presence, he makes it work.

Everything comes back to Garner, though—and even when the movie takes itself too seriously, thankfully she never does.

"Elektra," a 20th Century Fox release, runs 93 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Get blown away by 'GWTW' in 4-disc DVD set

"GONE With The Wind," one of the greatest movies of all time, has been digitally restored in a new DVD release that features more than five hours of extra features.

The movie features a remastered soundtrack and extensive bonus contents, all new on DVD and featured on two of the four discs. The bonus materials include the all-new 45-minute documentary, "Melanie Remembers: Olivia de Havilland Recalls 'Gone With the Wind'; and the critically acclaimed 1989 documentary "The Making of a Legend: Gone with the Wind," produced by L. Jeffrey and Daniel Mayer Selznick, the sons of GWTW's legendary producer.

In addition, there are also the 1939 Atlanta premiere footage as well as footage from the 1961 Civil War Centennial re-premiere in Atlanta with Selznick, Leigh and De Havilland; a 66-minute documentary on Clark Gable; and a 45-minute documentary on Vivien Leigh.

"Clark Gable: A King Remembered" is a portrait of the legendary actor's long and distinguished career as MGM's most famous leading man.

"GWTW" the classic

"Vivien Leigh: Scarlet and Beyond," hosted by Jessica Lange, is an insightful look at Leigh's short and troubled life.

Also included are mini documentaries covering the lives and careers of the most prominent cast members.

Warner's Ultra-Resolution process, which allows today's viewers to see parts of the images which were never visible before, has been used in three other major Warner Home Video releases—"Singin' in the Rain," "The Adventures of Robin Hood" and "Meet Me in St. Louis."

Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, Leslie Howard and De Havilland star in "Gone with the Wind," which for more than a half century has thrilled audiences with its eternal love affair, set in the South during the Civil War, between handsome Rhett Butler (Gable) and his sassy, headstrong heroine Scarlett O'Hara (Leigh).

With each new generation, "Gone with the Wind" continues to grow in popularity as new audiences discover and embrace the David O. Selznick production of Margaret Mitchells' Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

De Havilland earned her first Academy Award nomination for her performance as the sweet Melanie Hamilton. During her illustrious career, she got four more Oscar nominations and won two statuettes for "To Each His Own" and "The Heiress." She currently enjoys quiet retirement in Paris.

'I had no idea what happened,' Tara Reid says of her own wardrobe malfunction

NEW YORK—Tara Reid says she had no idea she was flashing the paparazzi when the strap of her dress slipped off her left shoulder as she walked the red carpet at Sean "P. Diddy" Combs' 35th birthday party last year.

"I swear to you, I had no idea that had happened," Reid said in an interview Thursday on the syndicated entertainment TV show "Access Hollywood." Excerpts were released in advance.

"I had a fur coat on, so when I took the coat off, the coat was heavy, and the strap came out with the coat. They were like, 'Tara, let me see the dress, let me see the dress' ... I didn't see the strap fall down, so I'm smiling like an idiot ... Then, when someone came up to me, I was like, 'Oh, I'm so embarrassed!'"

The 29-year-old actress said she was upset at the photographers' reaction to her wardrobe malfunction.

"I just hated that the paparazzi were high-fiving each other and laughing," she said. "It was so cruel. But it happened and ... you move on."

Reid also said she doesn't understand why she's labeled a party girl.

"What's the worst I've ever done? Dance on a table? Like, get drunk and dance on a table, what's so bad about that?"

Reid added that now that she's getting older, she's "calming down a lot." *AP*

TARA REID

'Catwoman' available this month on discs

SHOW TIME

"CATWOMAN" comes to DVD and VCD this January, also from Warner Home Video.

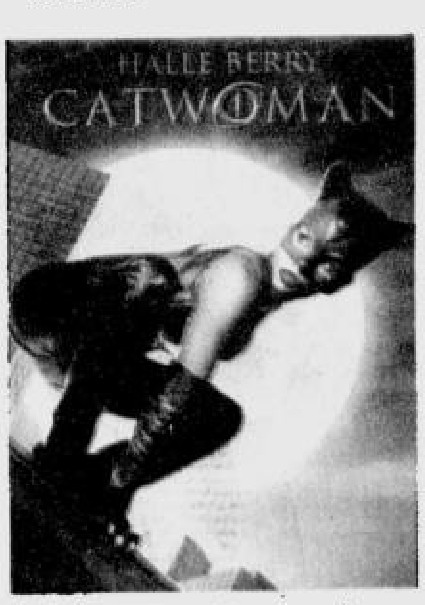
The adventure stars Academy Award-winner Halle Berry, Sharon Stone and Benjamin Bratt.

The "Catwoman" DVD includes special features such as an alternate ending, additional scenes and two documentaries on the evolution of the character.

"Catwoman" is available on DVD at P595 and VCD at P275.

In "Catwoman," Berry plays a sleek, whip-cracking, feline fatale who is out for revenge. Bratt is a cop torn between romance and duty, and Stone is a former supermodel turned cold-bloodied killer.

The eye-catching DVD features also include a behind-the-scenes tour, and the theatrical trailer.



HALLEY BERRY as "Catwoman"